■ LIFESTYLE/C1
Best, worst of RP art; notable books in '05

■ SPORTS/A17
Flashy Fil-Ams rule the roost in PBL cage wars

■ NEWS/A2
Luisita workers demand P321M as share in land converted to industrial park

■ ACROSS/A13
Boholanos prepare hero's burial for Fil-Am soldier killed in Iraq

Judge's slay shocks kith, kin; 80-year-old ma not yet told

BY Jhanree Napallacan
PDI Visayas Bureau

CEBU CITY—JUDGE HENRICK GENGOYON, a 1978 law graduate of the University of the Visayas, made a name for himself in the city as one of its leading human rights lawyers, defending political detainees in the 1980s.

JUDGE'S A4

PHILIPPINE DAILY
INQUIRER
BALANCED NEWS, FEARLESS VIEWS

Where loggers go, Brazilian worms follow

By Blanche S. Rivera

WHERE KNOW WHERE loggers have been? Earthworms can give you the answer.

A certain type of earthworm known as the

PHOTO A4

mail feedback@inquirer.com.ph · Monday, January 2, 2006 · 38 pages / vol. 21 / no. 25 · website: www.inq7.net

GIs' case perils RP-US ties

DOJ: Arresting 4 accused of rape unfriendly act toward US

By Armand N. Nocum

AMID CALLS FOR THE ARREST of the four US Marines charged with raping a 22-year-old Filipino woman, the Department of Justice yesterday warned that Philippine-United States relations could be strained should the arrest result in a unilateral abrogation of the Visiting Forces Agreement.

Justice Secretary Raul Gonzalez said the Philippines must first negotiate with the United States to "return to us the custody of the accused" before the arrest warrants against the American soldiers could be served.

"We cannot arrest them and break the treaty unilaterally. That can become an unfriendly act with a country that is aligned with us," Gonzalez said.

This legal issue is bound to crop up when the court in Olongapo City raffles off the case tomorrow and the judge is called upon to issue warrants in accordance with the law, the justice secretary said.

"That is the issue that will ensue whether the warrants issued by the court can be enforced, considering the VFA provision," Gonzalez said.

Paragraph 6, Article 5, of the VFA states: "The custody of any United States personnel over whom the Philippines is to exercise jurisdiction shall immediately reside with the United States military authorities, if they so request, from the commission of the offense until completion of all judicial proceedings."

Gonzalez said the Philippines could not just disregard the provisions of the VFA because a "treaty is a part of our laws of the land."

He said the VFA was ratified by the Philippine Senate. But Akbayan Rep. Loretta Ann

GIs CASE A6

MIDNIGHT JAN. 1, 2006: Brilliant pastures of light explode in the night sky over Manila as Filipinos from all walks of life send up their own fiery celebrations to welcome the New Year.

Saying goodbye to the 'Hello Garci' year

By Christian V. Esguerra and Luige A. del Puerto

ALTHOUGH UNCERTAIN OF WHAT lies ahead, Filipinos cheered the arrival of the new year with bursts of fireworks and sporadic gunfire as they finally back good riddance to the year of the "Hello Garci" tapes.

If the Department of Health's statistics were any gauge, the revelry that marked the coming of 2006 was a lot noisier than the previous New Year's celebrations, as 648 people—mostly with firecracker injuries—landed in hospitals around the country from Saturday night to early Sunday morning.

The total number of casualties during the merrymaking last year was 407.

But while there were at least two people killed last year, no deaths were recorded in last weekend's mayhem.

The Philippine National Police said there was a nearly 50-percent drop in cases of firecracker- and gunfire-related injuries in Metro Manila during its monitoring period from Dec. 16.

"Success would be zero casualty. That's the ideal number," declared Director Vidal Querol, head of the National Capital Region Police Office.

There were also fewer fires and no fire-related deaths as of press time.

One PNP official noticed there were fewer firecracker explosions this year, based on what he observed during the peak of the weekend revelry in Metro Manila.

"They lasted for about 10 to 15 minutes," said Chief Supt. Jaime Caringal, head of the police's Civil Security Group. "I didn't even notice [any] in the morning."

SAYING A9

ConCom's Cha-cha new battleground in '06

By Amando Doronila

ANALYSIS

THE COMPASS OF THE NATIONAL AGENda for 2006 points to constitutional change as the battleground that will decide whether President Macapagal-Arroyo will complete her elected term in 2010 or whether we will have a sweeping, top-to-bottom change of elected officials by next year.

In politics, a journalist's outlook is shaped by his daily encounter with reality, which makes him resistant to the optimistic views of governments. In the context of this tradition of skepticism, I choose to take the role of Cassandra, the harbinger of bad news, who prophesied the sacking of Troy in the midst of the 10-year siege of the city by the Greeks.

As a skeptic, I apply the test of skepticism with equal rigor to governments, to enemies and political players from civil society and the Church who have taken on the role of political activists believing they can make and unmake elected governments. The same goes for civil society activists who have appointed themselves arbiters of political morality with the boastful claim of the Ku Klux Klan and the lynch mob certainty of vigilantes.

It is from this position where I view the outlook for 2006, from which all the bonhomie and bombast of self-appointed

CONCOM'S A6

Ninoy murder convict knifed dead in New Bilibid Prisons

By Tarra V. Quismundo

ALL DRESSED UP FOR THE SPEcial evening Mass, retired police sergeant Cordova Estelo was psyched up for the countdown to the new year at the maximum security compound inside the New Bilibid Prisons in Muntinlupa.

For the past 14 years, Estelo's Christmas holidays had been spent at the crowded prison ever since he and and 15 other soldiers were meted out double life sentences in 1990 for the 1983 assassination of opposition leader Benigno Aquino Jr. and Aquino's alleged assassin, Rolando Galman.

But barely four hours before midnight on Saturday, Estelo would be dead.

He died while trying to pacify Manuel Dorosan, a fellow inmate at Building 11 of the maximum security compound, who was on a drunken frenzy brandishing a knife and a pistol.

Estelo died from a stab wound in his right side near his chest at about 10:45 p.m. on New Year's Eve, according to the death certificate issued by the NBP Hospital.

NINOY A6

NEWS BEHIND THE BIG NEWS

Senate kept secret votes rejecting US bases

By Tony S. Bergonia

A US AIRCRAFT carrier leaves Subic Naval Base on March 18, 1992, after the Senate rejected the proposed bases agreement.

SEPT. 16, 1991. Two of the Senate's "Magnificent 12" who voted against the agreement with the US: Senators Guingona and Macapagal.

JOVITO SALONGA, THE SENATE President, was the most sought after person in the old Senate building during those days in 1991 when the chamber pondered a treaty that would permanently alter the relationship between the Philippines and the former colonial power, the United States.

Salonga's office, a sparsely furnished room with books lying about everywhere, held the secrets that journalists wanted so badly to unlock during the deliberations for the ratification of the RP-US treaty that was to extend the life of the US military bases in the Philippines.

The secrets—mostly copies of

SENATE A6

WEATHER FORECAST

Second FRONTPAGE

Luisita workers demand P321M of profits

By Blanche S. Rivera

AFTER WINNING A GOVERNMENT RULING to parcel out to them the nearly 5,000-hectare sugar estate of former President Corazon C. Aquino's family, the workers of Hacienda Luisita are now pressing to collect up to P321 million in "unpaid profits" they say is due them as shareholders, or co-owners with the Cojuangcos, of the company that owns and manages the farm.

The farm workers, represented by the Alyansang ng Manggagawang Bukid sa Hacienda Luisita (Amalay), last met in Oct. with the Presidential Agrarian Reform Council (PARC) a motion asking it to resolve the issue of the conversion of land belonging to Hacienda Luisita into residential park.

Antonio Pedilla, legal counsel of Amalay, said the PARC had resolved only the farm workers' demand for the revocation of the stock distribution option (SDO) that has been in effect in the hacienda for the past 16 years.

"When the PARC resolved over the revocation of the SDO, but there's just one of many issues we wanted to see completed," Pedilla told the Inquirer in a phone interview yesterday.

3 main issues

The SDO revocation, the chap ter further said, enumerated the three main issues raised in the farm workers' complaint filed with the PARC in October 2005.

The PARC decided to title Amalay as the 20 to revoke the Hacienda Luisita stock scheme and to divide and distribute the 4,915-ha. estate to the hacienda's then 6,296 workers.

Co-owners of land

The SDO was a mechanism provided for under Republic Act No. 6657, or the Land Reform Law, which lets Agrarian beneficiaries own land as co-owners. Under the SDO, co-owners were made co-owners of the land through the issuance of shares of stock in the corporation that owned and managed the land subject to land reform as in the case of Hacienda Luisita, or RLL.

Share of proceeds

Pedilla said the farmers would ask the PARC to compel the HLC to pay the workers around P200 million as their share of the proceeds from the conversion and development of 500 ha in 1995, and 625 million for the use by the Rizal Commercial and Development Authority of another 77 ha for the Subic-Clark Expressway.

33 percent equity

The Luisita workers had received only three percent or P37 million from some P1.10-billion in earnings from the conversion of the 500 hectares into an industrial park, Pedilla said. The farmers should have received an amount representing their 33 percent equity as stockholders of the HLC or about P321 million.

Pedilla said the farmers' farmers received representation their "productivities down," but Pedilla said this referred to farm output and not profits from the development and property.

The Department of Agrarian Reform has said the government could distribute only around 4,500 ha of Hacienda Luisita because of the land conversion.

Go after HLI

"It's true that the land can no longer be distributed because it has been converted. But there is still property that can be retrieved, there are records you after the HLI for what should have been given the farmers from the conversion of the land," Pedilla said.

Pedilla said the HLI could reclaim the P321 million from the liquidation of the company's assets when the company is dissolved due to the SDO conversion.

PRESERVE THEIR: Thirteen-year President Macapagal-Arroyo with Mayor Jerry Dalipog of Bacnotan, Ilocos, during a visit to the famed banana rice terraces near the New Year weekend. The President, who has been pushing hard for domestic tourism, interacted Dalipog to oversee refurbishment of some of the two-area that have crumbled.

Quiet New Year for First Family

By Vincent Cabreza
PEP Newsbreaks Lauren Ramos

BAGUIO CITY—IN CONTRAST TO THE NOISY and rowdy gatherings in most parts of the country, as New Year's eve, the First Family had a quiet celebration at The Mansion, the cabinet-level, air-conditioned residence they rather than are during.

The only sound at The Mansion came from the drums of Digi. Ruben Lorenzana, band leader of the Presidential Security Group Combo, who spent the evening playing for the First Family.

Earlier, the 9th band packed up at 5 p.m. from in front of The Mansion gates where they played pop and band music to entertain Baguio residents and tourists.

PSG civilian employees Michelle Narvasa and Augusto Jeff Mendez and Zeddy Cruz formed the band.

On Saturday, tourists wanted to arrive at The Mansion's gates to catch a glimpse of President Macapagal-Arroyo and to listen to the 14-member PSG Combo.

"We were told that the members of the First Family always came out to greet the crowd, so we stayed here. I've never seen the President before," [illegible], 'cos every time [illegible] Lorenzana, Jun Miguel Lacayo who's for some out to buy cake," said a Mountain Province resident who only identified herself as Victoria. She said the band was a good idea.

"Medyo gaganda sana ang tanaga nya ang gumiling ng [illegible] sa unang taon [illegible] ang image and improve it the country. [illegible] sa gumiling like this to tourists like us," Victoria said.

Between midnight and [illegible] noon, no fireworks-related accidents or crimes were reported in Barangay Lardizo, where The Mansion is located, according to PSG Lieutenant [illegible].

Only eight cases of fireworks-related injuries were recorded in the city, after Mr. Arroyo ordered an aggressive anti-fireworks campaign.

The number of injuries reported was a [illegible] reduction to 2006. For Baguio, which has been in the news recently after cases of the bacterial disease meningococcemia caused panic in the summer capital last year, said Purificacion Molintas, City Health director of the Department of Tourism.

Almost all hotels and inns recorded a 90-percent occupancy rate holiday bookings this holiday season, Molintas said.

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People should decide on 'no-el,' says De Castro

By Cynthia D. Baldoz

VICE PRESIDENT NOLI DE CASTRO SAID yesterday the people should have the final say on whether or not to extend the 2007 national elections to pave the way for the proposed shift from a presidential to a parliamentary form of government.

De Castro said he would not be an obstacle to a transition government, even if he were to be stripped of his position, as his political future was subordinate to the interests of the people.

The Vice President was reacting to the "deadline" given by former President Fidel Ramos to President Macapagal-Arroyo to make a public statement on whether she was for or against scrapping the 2007 elections as proposed by the Consultative Commission (ConCom). The deadline lapsed yesterday.

Ramos had insisted that he will abandon the Ma Arroyo should she support the proposal to cancel the elections and extend the terms of elected government officials to 2010. He said his support by the President was conditioned on her willingness to cut short her term and working for a shift to a parliamentary system.

But De Castro refused to comment on the ultimatum.

"President Arroyo and former President Ramos are both experienced politicians. They know where they are going and what's good for the country," he said.

He said the no-election proposal had yet to be presented to Congress and ultimately to the people.

"All we ask for is that our people be provided adequate information on this issue so they can make the right decision," he said, speaking in Filipino.

De Castro said he would not mind if he would not be given a significant position in the parliamentary government as long as the new set-up would result in better governance.

"It means nothing to me if they remove me or not," he said. "But involves only my own personal interest, the interest of the majority is more important. It isn't what the people want. It is what is good for the country. The people who placed me in office," he said.

Meanwhile, De Castro said he supported efforts by the government-owned National Power Corp. to collect the P42 billion it said the Manila Electric Co. owed it.

De Castro made the statement to dent an accusation by the consumer group Sambahan Labor ng Bayan-Agrabiyudo ng Meralco (SLAM) that he was using his office to defend a planned government takeover of Meralco.

US, Asia seen to power world economy in '06

HONG KONG: THE WORLD ECONOMY heads into the new year powered by vigorous growth in the United States and Asia that will make it the strongest three-year period for 10 years, they said.

"The pretext of seeing global growth broke out to continue," president Konosuke Yamada of Credit Suisse First Boston.

"The coming year looks like being the third in a row in which it was almost the case of sure that the world will have particularly strong as a trend. On that basis, it could be the strongest three-year period for 10 years," they said.

But the Global Insight chief economist Nariman Behravesh, "the big question out there in 2006 is about the areas between the United States and Asia that has kept the global economy going."

"Will the areas outside Asia as well it to bolster because of recession and political issues?"

Tough US demands

A weakening in US demands for Chinese country's efforts, in particular in protectionist sentiment in, most obviously, a result of core Titanic, could all undermine relations between the two countries, he said.

Currency reform in China—Washington maintains the yuan is undervalued—is linked to another major risk for the world economy in 2006, namely the re-emergence US current account and trade deficits, he said.

These deficits were expected to cause a significant fall in the dollar in 2005—which never materialised—but they continue to mount to note the biggest imbalance threatening economic stability, economists say.

Other clouds on the horizon include a possible slowdown in the galloping US housing market and an increase in the consumer savings rate, which economists believe has been driven by soaring household wealth.

Inflation, along with oil, was the dominant theme for much of the second half of 2005, and it is likely to continue to figure prominently in 2006 as central banks remain on their guard.

The global economy's resilience to inflation in 2005 proved a revelation for many economists, providing fundamental structural changes witnessed in the last two decades as well as benign shifts in attitudes.

Economic slowdown

An oil surged from around $40 per barrel at the time of the year to more than $70 in August, many had forecast an economic slowdown. Instead, the economy went expected to feel the pinch from higher prices.

Judging by past experience, inevitable inflationary effects could require a tightening of interest rates, acting as a further brake on economic growth.

In Iraq, world economic growth is forecast to be above 3.2 percent in 2005 and inflation, which splinted in September, has remained in recent months in line with an easing of oil prices towards $60 per barrel.

"The most pleasant surprise and remarkable development in 2005 has been the resilience of the US and Asian economies to record oil prices," said Behravesh.

"In the past, if we'd have had this type of rise in oil prices, we'd have had weaker growth and higher inflation."

Looking ahead, according to Bank of America economist Lewis Alexander, the "most likely scenario" is for another "relatively strong" year for the global economy.

The said the agreement marking the Japan Group "took a number of new local investors ... banks used by the Chinese strengthening their financial sector."

He would see clubroom on the deal, however.

The Lippo Group is based in Jakarta, Indonesia, but has interests in Hong Kong and China.

AFP

Indons to invest ₱3B in RP

JAKARTA: LIPPO GROUP is joining with local partners, it is planning some P3 billion ($58.5 million) in a Philippine bank, Finance Manggagh Arrias announced Saturday.

"The Lippo Group (it) investing P3 billion in Export industry bank," Mr. Arrias said in statement in Bagdat City where we and her family were spending the holidays.

Work with vets to get benefits, gov't execs urged

GET YOUR ACT TOGETHER.

A former congressman who is currently a director of the Philippine Veterans Bank has urged the government and Mabini who it can assist groups to work together to obtain full benefits for aging Filipino veterans in the US Congress.

Former Connecticut Jim and Veterans participant Eduardo Pilapil, speaking before the new overseas Filipino officials at the inaugurating of the WWII Heritage Organization Inc. on 98, Senate in Senate last month, pointed out stark differences in the Philippine government and the Filipino veterans' positions on the US-based campaigns to expand benefits.

He said that while the top policy-making body of the Veterans Federation of the Philippines had voted one only for full equity with Filipino and US in the US Congress, some Philippine government officials were working for partial equity bills which would not give Filipino veterans the US benefits they [illegible] [illegible] covered.

He identified the government officials as belonging to the Department of National Senate, Philippine Veterans Affairs Office and the Philippine Embassy in Washington D.C.

He described the partial equity bills as "a continuation of the injustice done to our World War II veterans and a perpetuation of the inequity heaped upon the Filipino people by the Rescission Act."

It will be recalled that in 1946, the US Congress passed the Rescission Act, a law also denied to and removed from some 70 [illegible] our veterans their eligibility to receive US veterans benefits, despite the fact that the Philippines had fought under the flag of American nationals from 1939 to 1945.

Since 1945, Pilapil, who was also [illegible] secretary and [illegible] protocol, said the Philippine government had sought to reverse the injustice done to the Filipino veterans.

Hitman trailed judge

By Luige A. del Puerto, Marlon Ramos and Nikko Dizon

A MAN IN A BLACK SHIRT AND jeans was snooping around the gym where Judge Hermelo Ebarle was working out before the judge was shot dead Saturday, the police said yesterday, quoting eyewitnesses.

The man had overheard the gym's owner greet Ebarle as "Happy New Year" and therefore had the chance to confirm the identity of the judge who had so decided that governmental advisers of the multibillion Terminal 3 of Manila's international airport approve payment of P2 billion to Piatco, the consortium that built the terminal.

The man left the building before the judge did, according to the police.

Gregorio, 55, of the Bong City Regional Trial Court Branch 327, had just left the gym at Soldier's Hills Village in the Ayala Alabang, Muntinlupa, Metro Manila, and was walking home when one of two men on a motorcycle shot him in the back.

He was declared dead on arrival at a hospital in Muntinlupa.

Senior Supt. Bienvenido Marcelo, chief of the Camp Crame Police, said the man the police were looking for was about 28 to 30 years old, believes 5'8 to 5'9 tall, and of medium build.

Investigators were working on this information in an effort to identify the man who shot dead the controversial judge.

"We're not saying this man is already the suspect. But he was making inquiries about the gym, including [how to become] a member," Marcelo said. "This is at least [a lead]."

Director General Avelino Razon has directed the Southern Luzon Police to commit a task force to investigate the murder.

Ronaldo pointed out that the VFA was a mere executive agreement because the US Senate had yet to ratify it.

He US servicemen originally underwent preliminary investigations before the Olongapo City prosecutor's office on allegations that they raped a Filipina woman inside a van at the Subic Bay Freeport, a former US naval base.

Most of them, along with the Filipina rape driver Therese Suntaxi Jr., were formally charged on Tuesday, namely, Staff Sgt. Chad Carpenter and Lance Corporals Dominic Duplantis, Daniel Smith and Keith Silkwood. The complaints against Lance Corporals Corey Bartels and Albert Lane were dismissed.

Ronaldo said they raised a hand over the detailing of the accused at the John Gil Holloway Anderson Group (Anzog), an office within the US Embassy compound on Roxas Boulevard in Manila.

Lenient treatment

Morales and Ebarao did not flop. Drug Czar Gen said Friday the lenient treatment of the accused emphasized the need for the Philippine government to insist that it take custody of them.

For his part, House Minority Leader Francis Escudero said the accused should be detained. "They should be [kept] in a detention facility very much like Filipinos who are accused of common crimes in the United States," Escudero said.

"Whenever special status they have as US servicemen, they lose it when they committed

Judge's slay shocks ...

At the height of militant unconcern in Metro Cebu between 1984 and 1985, he joined protesting workers, hugging a portable typewriter to prepare court pleadings right on the picket line to protest the police and military beats dispersing the striking workers.

After the 1986 People Power Revolution, Gregorio relocated to Metro Manila when he was named senior prosecutor. He joined the judiciary in the late 1990s.

The father of eight siblings, Gregorio regularly came home to Cebu to see his mother and the graves of his father, Narda, who died two years ago. All of Gregorio's siblings are in Cebu, except for a sister who lives in the United States.

He last visited the city on All Saints' Day, an occasion for the Gregorios family to hold its annual reunion, according to Elsie, daughter of Gregorio's eldest brother, Jerome.

Elsie said the judge, his wife Maribeth and their five children—four girls and one boy aged 13 to 28—were supposed to be here on Jan. 15 for the ordination of the Monday Mendoza, held in honor of Cebu's parish

said...the father [is] Nilo.

"My sons all shocked and could not believe what happened," Elsie said.

Jerome said he was still bewildered by his brother's brutal death. "We are still in a state of grief, as the family cannot [even yet] understand...he said someone marked himself."

The Inquirer sees a new marriage yesterday in Jerome asking for a statement from the family but it was his son, Jerick, who responded by saying that they could not issue any statement as his uncle's siblings were still meeting at the family home in Angeles Street.

The siblings have to inform their 86-year-old mother, Conchita, about Hendrik's death.

Jerick said the Gregorio siblings were also discussing when to bring Hendrik's body home to Cebu.

Elsie and Jerick said their uncle was a very kind and good person who, despite his stature, had never charged and had maintained a simple lifestyle.

"He was not a corrupt judge. In fact, he usually made decisions based on what was right, even if it put his life at risk," Elsie said.

With reports from Gil C. Cabacungan Jr., Nestor Burgos, Jeff Elegado, Rosemarie Francisco, Jhoanna Ballaran, Tarra Quismundo, Jaime Laude, Jerome Aning, Cynthia Balana, Christine Avendaño, Jocelyn Montemayor, Ellen Tordesillas, Ding Cervantes, Ellen Ng, Ma. Ceres Doyo, Ricardo Saludo, Ramon Tulfo, Ramon Farolan, Ramon Casiple, Rene Bonoan, Ricardo Abad, Rigoberto Tiglao, Jarius Bondoc, Jose Ma. Montelibano, Jose Ma. Nolasco, Jose Ma. Sison, Jose Ma. Zamora, Jose Ma. Zumel, Jose Ma. Zumel, Jose Ma. Zumel

'Pinoy charm is top tourist attraction'

By Jeremy Andog

IT'S NOT THE PLACE BUT THE PEOPLE.

The warmth and hospitality of the Filipinos rather than the country's physical attractions were the main draw for foreign tourists who came to the Philippines, according to Tourism Secretary Joseph 'Ace' Durano.

"A big chunk of the country's annual inbound tourists were repeat visitors and they returned to the Philippines to savor again their overall positive experience. Number one in their list was their memorable encounter with the people," Durano said in an interview.

While official tourism figures were still being reconciled, the secretary predicted that for 2003, foreign tourist arrivals would have exceeded 2000's record of 2.2 million visitors.

Foreign exchange in 2003 was projected to have spun about $2.3 billion as local hotels, restaurants, malls, other tourist facilities and for transportation, Durano said.

Tourism also generated more than 500,000 new jobs in 2003, on top of the 2 million workers already in the industry, he said.

Durano said that on the necessary benefits from tourism in the form of profits and jobs, more Filipinos would become conscious of the importance of the "culture of tourism."

The term was coined by former tourism secretary now Sen. Richard Gordon, who had said that encouraging host-returning friendliness to the visitors by showing that tourists were safe and comfortable translated to a better image of the Philippines abroad.

Durano said that this year, the Department of Tourism would be unveiling new marketing plans and beefing up promotional campaigns to take its operations overseas, emerging and affected by.

Aside from improving its marketing drive to China, the DOT is also targeting India, Russia and Australia for its "market specific" approach to promoting Philippine tourism, he said.

Rising tourist arrivals should also mean a need for more accommodations for them, Durano said, as he called for an increase in the country's hotel capacity.

The secretary said total room capacity was only around 3 million.

In 2003, the government was able to raise about $3 billion in investments, mostly from abroad, to construct and expand tourist accommodations and facilities in the country.

Senate kept secret votes rejecting US bases

By Inquirer staff

Senate floor, President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, copies of the draft treaty, communications between foreign affairs officials and the US Embassy—were being kept under tight guard in Salonga's office.

But their contents dribbled slowly out of other senators' rooms, which were much easier to pry open than Salonga's cabinets.

The trick was to approach the **senators with loose papers you can tape** together in front. This was to avoid **either of two things happening**—the senators peering on their **best behavior and talking prudently**, or clamming up altogether to avoid **spilling the beans on a treaty de**scribed at no-one-sided in the Uni**ted States' favor that is might later** base crafted by people who wanted **the Senate to make the document.**

To do this, a reporter needed sharp ears, a long memory and sound judgment on whether a senator's comments sent back propaganda or gibberish.

Another bellwether of information were members of the senators' staffs who were hired into conservatives inside elevators, the not-so-exclusive senators' lounge and other office-serving holes.

The deliberations on the treaty were attended with so much legal jargon that covering them became quite boring, at times for some of the journalists.

Even before the treaty was officially transmitted to the Senate for ratification, reporters already knew which senators were likely to vote to reject or ratify it, although quite a few surprises were sprung at the end.

Firm editorial stand

"Senators were treating very high at the time," says Arnold Clavio, who was then covering the Senate for dzBB radio.

The treaty drew out strong views, not only from the senators who were deciding its fate, but also from the reporters who were channeling how the Senate would make its historic decision.

Emotions were so high that Sen. Letlet Ramos Shahani, who chaired the committee on foreign relations that was vetting the treaty before it could be brought to the floor for debate, complained of what she perceived to be the reporters' anti-Senate bias.

[The busyness had by then made a convoluted stand—the US military bases must go. The issue became so contentious even within the houses that the newspaper's president at the time, Enrique Belo, a gentleman of the old school, resigned because he could not reconcile his pro-bases position with the paper's anti-bases stance.]

At the point straddling seats of the old Senate building that is now a museum, reporters were encountering the first television coverage of the debates.

In the same way that it divided the Senate, the bases treaty issue had driven a wedge among reporters who were on opposite sides of the issue.

As the late Sen. Neptali Gonzales was literally defending the treaty on the Senate floor as one so valuable that its defeat would lead to economic doom for the country, one reporter got on carnival away that he began shouting hosannas.

Another reporter shouted back as here is defiance of Gonzales.

Drap's favorite

But though business was starting high, there was also plenty of comic relief. Shahani Bernardino, who was then covering the Senate for the defunct Daily Globe, recalls how the then Sen. Joseph Estrada would step into the well-lighted session hall in dark glasses to surreptitiously catch forty winks—sleeping.

At one point, Estrada, a former movie star whose anti-bases position did much to popularize the cause, approached a TV camera man and asked him not to focus his camera on him.

"Then he would return to his seat, put his sunglasses back on and sleep," Bernardino recalls.

Clavio, who now hosts the popular morning show "Unang Hirit" on GMA 7, recalls how he could not forget the floor debate between Senators Ernesto Herrera and Agapito "Butz" Aquino.

Herrera was making a pitch for the retention of the bases, citing a US promise of assistance in labor training if the Senate ratified the treaty.

Ethnic 'insult'

Herrera, a Ilokano who speaks with a thick Visayan accent, was saying that he was convinced of the benefits the country would derive from the treaty, including the promised dollars that would go "letter" into other training.

He of course meant "favor."

The anti-bases Butz Aquino, who just could not let pass an opportunity for an ethnic insult, stood up and asked Herrera if he meant "letter" or later."

The exchange did not make it to the papers, but it went into the record as one of the lowest points of the Senate treaty deliberations.

The debates were replete with images that would be etched forever in the minds of those who covered the whole issue.

Cory rebuffed

Ti Davis, one of the most memorable sights was that of President Corazon Aquino in a yellow raincoat marching in the rain from Malacañang in the Senate to lobby for the treaty's ratification. She would be rebuffed by Butz Aquino, the brother of her husband, the martyred late Senator Ninoy Aquino Jr.

While his eloquence and flair for public speaking paled in comparison with that of his illustrious brother, Butz would utter what to Clavio was one of the most winning words on the treaty and perhaps the only quotable statement in his entire public life: "I love my country more than I love my President."

The courageous woman who led the movement to oust the dictator Ferdinand Marcos stood in the Senate, detached from the cries asking to let the American military presence remain in the Philippines, and was rejected. Photographers fired away.

One of the most moving images was that of the crowd underneath and on-stature, the late Jose W. Diokno, who sat in his wheelchair in the gallery watching as senators cast and explained their votes.

When it became clear that the treaty would be defeated, Diokno, already weak from cancer, cried to stay from his wheelchair as he raised a clenched fist, a gesture he had made countless times in the past to many anti-Marcos rallies.

He would die a few days after the treaty was rejected.

The debates also allowed many opportunities for grandstanding and gimmickry as some anti-bases senators wanted their act to be recorded in history in types larger than they deserved.

Timing, entertainment

A proven master of timing, Sen. Ernesto Maceda was remembered by journalists not as much for what he said but for the chance he tried to pull off. He ended his speech at exactly 5 p.m. with the words "Consummatum est. It is done." The pronouncement was to Clavio's dying words was intentional, and some journalists refused to pick it up.

The entertainment was lately provided by Gonzales who, in the beginning, was quite content to watch from the sidelines as reporters interviewed his more knowledgeable colleagues. But the ex-movie star could not stand being ignored for long. One day he approached the group of reporters and asked: "Saka, hindi pipe ko (maybe also I should bring going to interview me, too)."

The former actor not only provided a light and amusing side to the treaty deliberations, he literally brought the bases debate to the level of entertainment.

While the whole issue was boiling the country, friends produced an anti-bases film "Sa Kuko ng Agila" in which he also starred. He succeeded in getting his Senate colleague, Sen. Miki Guerrero, to be his leading lady despite the more memorable thing about the movie was the name that showed Manila hiring a very stiff Guerrero.

Reporters cited every trick in the book to squeeze information from the senators, especially when they were holding meetings behind closed doors. They tried smuggling tape recorders through the waiters, hold their ears to the walls and tried to bribe the surgeon of Senate staffers with bottles of hard.

But the most important information that landed in the front pages of the days one would come straight from the horses' mouths. Some senators just could not resist the temptation of being quoted in the papers.

Nature helped

In the end, even nature helped the opponents of the US bases. At the height of the bases debate, Mt. Pinatubo erupted and blanketed Clark Air Base with thick ash fall that make the facilities all but useless to the US Air Force. The Americans abandoned Clark and relocated to Subic, as if to underscore the Senate decision.

When the day came for the senators to vote, Sen. Wigberto Tañada called on anti-bases advocates to wear green. On the Senate floor, as rejection became clearer with each vote cast, reporters would be searching those wearing green.

The partying began in the streets and it would be a long, long night.

Where loggers go . . .

By Inquirer staff

Brazilian earthworm is the **wild tale** signs that an area has been logged, whether the loggers, the government or even the communities deny the activity, according to biologist Dante Flores.

"If we see a Brazilian worm, you know that an area has been logged ... anywhere you go, the Brazilian earthworm is there," he said, adding that the only species you can find from Rabuyan (Island) to Subic," said Flores, an earthworm expert.

Brazilian worms, named so because of their origin, are pink with yellow bands.

Flores, who has spent the past three years studying earthworms in the Philippines, said the Brazilian earthworms, which usually thrive in the lowlands, are transferred to upland communities by human activity.

The Brazilian earthworm can usually grow with the tree species until he replanting after a forest has been logged over. The trees are often taken from the lowlands, where the Brazilian earthworms are found.

"They can colonize any kinds of habitat. They are transferred by human activity and are highly invasive," Flores said.

He cited the extension of Brazilian earthworms in a denuded forest in Hinabangan, Negros Occidental. The forest, which is 90 percent logged over, has a huge population of Brazilian earthworms.

Unlike other species, the Brazilian earthworm's excretion becomes compact, which blocks the entry of water into the soil instead of facilitating it and helping reduce floods.

"It's common to see flash floods, not really rural [other] earthworms because they have holes, which make it easier for the rain to go straight to the roots of the trees," Flores said.

He said threats to republican environment by farmed farmers, an expert on earthworm taxonomy at the Eastern University Biodiversity Research Center, and Flores revealed that the Philippines would have the highest diversity of earthworms in the world.

He said there are "ridiculously high endemism and diversity of earthworms," Flores quoted James as saying based on discoveries during fish exploration last month.

There are at least 200 earthworm species in the Forests of Luzon and on Mt. Makiling and the municipality of Mayon but in Mindanao. The Visayas could easily reveal another 200 "undescribed" species, Flores said.

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Keep send-off groups small, travelers told

By Nikko Dizon

YOU DON'T NEED THE WHOLE BARANGAY to see you off at the airport.

Giving for the exodus of holidaymakers and overseas Filipino workers who spent the holidays in the country, the Manila International Airport Authority (MIAA) Thursday issued tips on how to avoid postoperative hassles.

While Filipinos are traditionally close-knit, a MIAA official said large send-off parties composed of family members and friends unnecessarily add to the congestion at the Ninoy Aquino International Airport (NIA).

"Having one or two relatives or friends bring you to the airport and see you off is already enough," Capt. Rodrigo Ocampo, chief of operations at the NIA Airport Security Center, said in an interview.

Congestion also adds to the security nightmare at the NIA, where tight security measures are being implemented in light of the global terrorism threat.

Ocampo said an estimated 11,000 passengers, mostly holidaymakers and OFWs, were expected to leave the country via the NIA beginning Jan. 2.

To expedite postdeparture procedures, Ocampo advised passengers to place their personal belongings that have metal components, like belts and jewelry, in their hand-carry baggage.

"By doing that, passengers won't have to remove their belts or jewelry before going through the X-ray machine and then put them on again while in line, causing long queues at the security checks," Ocampo said.

He said that by placing their valuables in their hand-carry bags, passengers also minimized the risk of losing their property when these are placed on a tray and run through the X-ray machine.

Among other tips Ocampo gave departing passengers were:

- Confirm your return flight bookings.
- Be at the airport at least four hours before your flight's scheduled departure time. OFWs should first proceed to the Blas OFW Lounge for validation of their predeparture documents before checking in.
- Fill out the immigration embarkation form, which is usually given out together with the airline ticket, before proceeding to the immigration area; filling out the form at the immigration counter can cause delay.
- Have P550 or $10 ready for the terminal fee.
- Stay within the airport premises after checking in.

Ocampo reiterated that bullets used as amulets and key chains were prohibited in the airport and can invite trouble.

Don't go to Kuwait on tourist visas, DFA warns OFWs

THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS has issued a warning to Kuwait-bound Filipinos not to use tourist visas to try and find employment in that country.

"The Department of Foreign Affairs advises all overseas Filipino workers bound for Kuwait to possess the proper work permits and residence visas and not tourist visas in order to avoid problems with immigration authorities in that Middle East country," said the DFA in a statement, noting that Kuwaiti immigration was "very strict" about issuing employment documents.

The travel advisory was issued on the recommendation of Charge d' Affaires Rolando Endaya of the Philippine Embassy in Kuwait.

Endaya said foreign workers with expired tourist visas, arrested Filipinos among them, were being required to pay a penalty of KD1 (Kuwaiti dinar) a day, which is equivalent to P193.

Some of the OFWs are now staying at the Philippine Embassy's welfare center.

OFWs going to Kuwait on tourist visas "are likely to be exploited by unscrupulous employers and may eventually find themselves dissatisfied with their wages unpaid," Endaya said.

He said it was not easy to find good jobs in Kuwait unless a foreign worker had a visa-10.

"Majority of Filipino workers in Kuwait have only a visa-20, which is for domestic workers and is not transferable unless agreed upon by the employers," Endaya said.

He said those holding visa-20s cannot work in hotels, restaurants or offices. Nikko Dizon

The WORLD

Cito Lorenzo B. Gozo

Subway strike, car-burning mar New Year festivities

NEW YORK—HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF New Year's revelers rang in 2006 from Times Square as the famous crystal ball dropped on the final seconds of the weary and battered old year.

"Guns bring an armful and bang pistols!" exclaimed Tatia Brandon, visiting from Arlington, Texas, as the crowd burst into cheers at the stroke of midnight.

Londoners ignored a subway strike to welcome the New Year, Iranian Japanese climbed a snow-capped peak to see the first sunrise of 2006, Gls in Iraq got a year-end "American Idol" treat.

New Year's celebrations like these spread throughout the world Saturday and early Sunday and were generally jubilant, a contrast with last year when the devastation of the Indian Ocean tsunami led many countries and individuals to cancel festivities.

In parts of Asia, the threat of terrorism loomed large, and a bombing at a market in Indonesia killed eight people and wounded 45.

An ambient animal chorus and the countdown 2006 lit up cute Times Square, the massive crowd nevertheless more than 18 blocks up Broadway and the surrounding streets, sang "Auld Lang Syne" as one voice.

In Atlanta, Rich Wight celebration organizers estimated more than 1 million people were in the city's celebration of the new year.

The throng in Boston was Mardi Gras, in honor of hurricane-ravaged New Orleans. The "Spirit of New Orleans" parade featured carnival masks, and jazz bands joined in.

New Orleans itself started the New Year's celebration with a traditionally festive jazz funeral procession in memory of its hurricane victims. Despite the dreariness, the city also tried to welcome 2006 with reserve and a heavy sprinkling of a giant gumbo pot to mark the start of the new year.

Revelers were urged not to light fireworks out of fear that they would ignite dead vegetation, and city officials offered throughout the city or the blue plastic tarps draped over thousands of damaged roofs.

Flooding from storms in the West forced Reno, Nevada, to move its New Year's Eve fireworks back a day to Monday, but the mayor still promised to hold a New Year's Eve countdown.

Las Vegas, meanwhile, kept its character—everything to excess—with the Strips dazzling revelry a mass simultaneous New Year's Eve toast, complete with 14,000 Lipstick rope and some 200 cases of Champagne, and an annual Montreal billed as the largest New Year's Eve party outside New York.

In France, guests turned lunch-deals at cars in a traditional year-end form of revelation, but the country appeared in fewer revelry, in a massive resurgence of the city-ring that broke out that fall.

By 4 a.m. Sunday police reported 392 vehicles burned—just slightly more than the comparable figure from last year, 323, police said. They also arrested 366 people, but it wasn't clear if the arrests were linked to the vandalism.

Hundreds of American soldiers in Iraq got a special show from "American Idol" singer Diana DeGarmo and other entertainers at Camp Victory in Baghdad. AP

British woman marries dolphin

JOSUALESH—MOMENTS TOOK her turn Cindy 15 years ago. She said it was love at first sight. This week she finally took the plunge and proposed. The lucky "guy" plunged right back.

In a modest ceremonies in Josualesh Reef in the southern Israeli port of Eilat, Bradley, a 41-year-old British citizen, apparently became the world's first person to "marry" a dolphin.

Dressed in a white dress, a veil and pink flowers in her hair, Bradley got down on one knee on the dock and gave Cindy a kiss. And a piece of herring.

"It's not a perverted thing. I do love this dolphin. He's the love of my life," she said hinting upon her return to London.

Bradley, who said she empty clothes and promotes rock bands in England, has visited Israel several times a year since first meeting the dolphin.

When asked in the past if she had a boyfriend, she would always reply "No. I'm going to end up with Cindy." On Wednesday, she made it official, and at Whale she underlined the "wedding" had no legal bearing she did say it reflected her deep feelings toward the bottlenosed, 35-year-old object of her affection.

"It's not a bad thing; it just something that we did because I love him, but not in the way that you love a man. It's just a pure love that I have for this animal," she said. AP

Churchill willing to let Gandhi starve to death, say archives

LONDON—WINSTON CHURCHILL, Britain's World War II prime minister, was prepared to let Indian independence leader Mahatma Gandhi starve to death if he went on hunger strike while interned during the war, archives released in London showed Saturday.

He thought Gandhi should be dealt with like any other detainee if he refused food.

Churchill's tough line was recorded during war Cabinet meetings, which also showed Britain's confusion over how to handle the charismatic Indian leader's nonviolent civil disobedience.

The notes record Churchill as saying Gandhi should not be detained and "let him die as he likes."

Deputy Cabinet Secretary Sir Norman Brook's notes reveal ministers wondered whether Gandhi as a martyr would lead to a mass uprising in India—and conduct sentiment for Britain.

However, they did not want to free Gandhi and allow him to campaign against the war and British rule while the crown colony was under the threat of Japanese invasion.

Gandhi was held for two years in the Aga Khan's Palace in Pune, western India, from August 1942 after disowning India's involvement in the war and calling for civil disobedience.

Indian many, Lord Ormsby Gallagher, war ministers a campaign stating he was "strongly in favor of letting (Gandhi) starve to death" if he went on hunger strike.

However, officials in London warned that the backlash would be too powerful.

Lord Halifax, Britain, the ambassador to the United States and a former viceroy of India and foreign secretary, told Cabinet the day after Gandhi's release in 1944 that he, too, "Whatever the disadvantages of letting him out, his death in detention would be worse."

Historians decided in January 1943 that although they could not be seen to cave in to a hunger strike, they would "not be disinclined" to let Gandhi die "as he likes."

Deputy Cabinet Secretary Sir Norman Brook's notes reveal ministers wondered whether Gandhi as a martyr would lead to a mass uprising in India—and conduct sentiment for Britain.

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HUNDREDS of thousands of revelers watch as the year 2006 is brought in with fireworks in New York's Times Square, Jan. 1. Reuters

N. Korean troops told to become 'human bullets' against US attacks

SEOUL—STRATEGIST NORTH KOREA, in a New Year message on Sunday, urged its soldiers to become "human bullets and bombs" capable of suicide US attacks and vowed to keep forming to feed its people amid international fears of famine.

The nation also vowed to build nuclear with South Korea in an editorial message carried jointly by three newspapers representing the ruling communist party, military and youth group.

"Whatever the situation is, the principled stand of our party and army remains unchanged," read the message, according to the official Korean Central News Agency.

It urged North Korea's 1.1 million troops to become "human bullets and bombs" defending the state led by Kim Jong-il, one of the world's most isolated countries, from possible US attacks.

The North also called on South Korea to join it in "struggle to resolutely foil the US attempt to launch another war" on the Korean peninsula.

"We must remove the root cause of war completely from this land by launching a nationwide campaign for driving out the US troops," the message said.

The United States has been locked in a standoff for years with the United States over its development of nuclear weapons. It has stepped up its anti-US rhetoric in recent weeks following US criticism of its human rights record.

The editorial, however, avoided touching on the stalemated nuclear disarmament negotiations which involve the United States, both Koreas, China, Russia and Japan. AFP

Treason trial for Syria's ex-VP urged

DAMASCUS—SYRIAN PRESIDENT Bashar Assad Saturday for the country's former vice president to face treason charges after he publicly accused President Bashar al-Assad of threatening Rafiq Hariri just months before Lebanese ex-premier's assassination.

"We appeal to Justice Minister Mohammed Ghalib to bring Abdel Halim Khaddam before justice for high treason and to take the necessary measures," said speaker Mahmoud al-Abzaah.

The parliament passed the motion unanimously calling for a trial during a regular session to which some of lawmakers accused Khaddam of "treason" and "corruption" for his remarks, which dealt a new blow to Assad's regime.

"I demand, in my own name and the name of the people, that Khaddam is judged because he has attacked the dignity of Syria and humiliated millions of Syrians," said MP Mohammed Hamsho.

Khaddam, long the architect of Syria's military and political domination of neighboring Lebanon, made his explosive claims in an interview with Dubai-based Al-Arabiya television.

"I will destroy anyone who tries to hinder our decisions," Khaddam quoted Assad as telling Hariri during a meeting in Damascus. AFP

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Ladies' night, Ayala Alabang
January 28 — Museum and mall tour
Lettermen concert, Araneta Coliseum
January 29 — Sunday Mass, SBC Chapel
Campus tour
Sto. Niño procession
Jam session, Bykes Cafe, Makati
January 30/31 — Beach outing, Montemar, Bataan
January 31 — Farewell dinner, Makati

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Gunmen blow up UN workers' club in Gaza Strip

GAZA—MASKED GUNMEN STORMED INTO a club for United Nations workers in Gaza City on Sunday and blew up the building, in a new sign of spiraling unrest ahead of a Palestinian election.

It was the first such attack in Gaza on a UN target and came against a backdrop of growing unease among foreigners. Just over one day earlier, a group freed three British foreigners that had been seized on Thursday in a prison in Israel.

The bombing was another big blow for President Mahmoud Abbas, just hours after he had vowed to impose order ahead of a Jan. 25 election and to militants summoned the majority of his factions to talks aimed at a truce they had followed at his behest.

Gunmen burst into the UN club, one of the few places that alcohol is served in conservative Muslim Gaza. It had been closed for the day. The attackers tied up the security guard and struck him with gun butts.

They then poured gasoline in front of the bar, set off a detonator cable and blew up the charges, ripping up the roof and shattering the windows.

There were no immediate claims of responsibility.

The United Nations is generally viewed with sympathy in Gaza.

Its agency supports Palestinian refugees and does humanitarian work in the territory, which has a population of 1.4 million people, is the second biggest employer after the Palestinian Authority. Reuters

WorldBriefs

Russia cuts off gas to Ukraine

MOSCOW—Russia began cutting off gas to Ukraine in a dispute that could set darkness over a wintry Europe on the very day that Moscow debuted an alternative of the Group of Eight industrialized nations. Russian officials said Ukraine was refusing pressure to pay gas prices sampling Ukraine exchange after talks refused to pay the increased amount Moscow was demanding for its gas and last-ditch efforts failed to resolve the price row. "In this situation, which is the fault of the Ukrainian side, we have been forced to start reducing gas transit to the pipeline to Ukraine," Gazprom spokesperson Sergei Kuprianov said. Gazprom supplies 25 percent of Russia's natural gas—most of it via Ukraine. Moscow is seeking a rise in the price of gas it sells to Ukraine to $220 per 1,000 cubic meters from the current $65. Reuters

Sudanese hostages freed in Iraq

BAGHDAD—Five Sudanese hostages held by al-Qaida in Iraq were reported on Saturday to have been freed, as at least 14 people were killed in a series of attacks across the country. A day after Khartoum shut down its embassy in Baghdad to live with the kidnappers' demands, Al-Jazeera television said the Sudanese foreign ministry has announced the release of the five hostages, who included a diplomat. The Iraqi government in Baghdad was unable to confirm the report. In Qatar on Thursday, Ghazali Ibn Mohammad Ahmed Abdallah, an Islamist statement, giving Khartoum 48 hours to break off diplomatic relations with Baghdad, close its embassy and "withdraw all its representatives" or Iraq. Khartoum then closed down its embassy and withdrew its diplomats on Friday. AFP

Sharon to undergo heart operation

JERUSALEM—Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon will undergo a heart operation on Thursday, the Haaretz newspaper reported Sunday. Doctors at Hadassah Ein Kerem hospital in Jerusalem will perform a non-emergency angioplasty, a relatively routine test for coronary artery disease, in which the blood flow to the heart is restricted. In the operation a tiny balloon will be inserted into an artery to push fatty plaque back against the artery wall to make room for more blood to flow. This reopened blood flow reduces the risk of heart attack and improves heart health. "The decision to operate on the prime minister will be made by the doctors. An official communique will be published," a senior official at the prime minister's office told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. AFP

Saying goodbye to the 'Hello Garci' year

From page A1

Overall, firecracker victims had an average age of 10 years. The oldest was 60 and the youngest, 10 months old.

Nelsina Lumio, 45, of Pagadian City was injured on Saturday night even while she was not directly involved. She was asleep when a bullet rain through her roof and grazed her head.

Health Secretary Francisco Duque III attributed the slight increase in the overall casualty toll to cheap firecrackers smuggled from China, and to so-called Filipino-style pyrotechnic remembered to the market last month.

The device is called "boga," a makeshift cannon made of plastic pipe whose explosion is triggered by dynamited shotgun.

Almost 20 percent of all firecracker-related cases involved eye injuries and "boga," which hit 16 people and was partly blamed for a significant increase in such injuries.

Fewer stray bullets

The Pagadian woman might not agree but officials said one bright spot in the latest celebration was the marked decrease in the number of people hit by stray bullets.

Based on monitoring since Dec. 22, the figure was more down by 66 percent to 39, compared with 115 people hit in 2004.

Counting all types of injuries, including those caused by firecrackers, stray bullets and others, the DOH recorded a total of 618 cases during the 12-day period, representing a 4-percent increase from the previous 546 cases.

Combined DOH and Philippine National Police figures showed three people died in the last up to 2006, including two people who swallowed the poisonous "dancing firecrackers" known as "kwitis."

Of interest in "kwitis" and its cousin, the Mitsuri (Idol Sofia, who was killed by indiscriminate firing on Christmas Day in General Trias, Cavite).

Well worth it

"That's not bad. It's good enough," Duque said, referring to the DOH's admonitions against the use of firecrackers during New Year celebrations.

Asked if the results were worth the P1.2 million spent on the information drive, he said, "Oh yes, it's certainly was worth it ... we might have to spend a little bit more for the coming years to ensure greater result."

The latest figures were not far different from those in the last five years, when the number totals hovered between 500 and 600 cases, he said.

So many as 1,000 casualties were recorded in 2000.

Poor bystanders

Another disturbing figure that showed up in the latest statistics (by police) was that nearly half (47 percent) of the 582 people injured by firecrackers were apparently bystanders. Half of the number were also children aged 15 years and under.

"The implication was that these people suffered from firecrackers thrown at them by irresponsible handlers," said Dr. Ilo-o Tsang, head of the DOH National Epidemiology Center.

In the several years, still, Metro Manila registered the biggest number of casualties at 162, followed by Region 4 at 124 cases.

Drastic proposal

With the public apparently heeding slowly from reminders of the perils of firecrackers, Duque is considering drastic measures to curb firecracker-related injuries.

He suggested that the government use fireworks and leave them only selling pyrotechnic devices. He didn't say if the proposal would include banning firecrackers.

But Duque acknowledged his proposal alone wouldn't solve the problem, saying the issue needed a "broader perspective."

"This is an industry," he said. "Suppose there, their education are dependent on this. Even if there is a noble intention to completely ban the manufacture [this] we can't do this overnight. You must be able to prepare and ease them out of the industry and introduce them to small- and medium-scale enterprises."

Explosion at The Mansion

In Baguio City, the only explosion to rock The Mansion, the President's vacation home, during the New Year's Eve revelry came from the drums of Tiipl. Edwin Lorenzana, band leader of the Presidential Security Group Combo. (See story on Page A2.)

They spent a good part of the night playing for the First Family.

Reports from police and hospital authorities showed a sober celebration, with few cases of firecracker victims in the flood region and Luzon City.

With reports from Nikko Dizon in Cebu, Jaymee Gamboa in Davao, Michael Lim Ubac in Cagayan de Oro, Jeffrey Ordaniel in Iloilo City, Jhoanna Ballaran in Bacolod City, Jerry Esplanada in Dagupan City, Ding Cervantes in Baguio City, Jeffrey Damicog in Cebu City, Ben Serrano in Zamboanga City

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Ghosts of the year past

EDITORIAL

IN HER NEW YEAR'S MESSAGE, THE PRESIDENT used the strengthening of the peso as an omen of good fortune, and then called on the people to "break from the past and face a brave new future." It was yet another variation on a theme she first sounded during the 2004 elections, and then repeated, with renewed emphasis, during her last State Of the Nation Address: The Philippines is two countries, one poised for economic takeoff, the other mired in the politics of the past.

It is the responsibility of leadership to set the agenda, and we do not quarrel with the President for trying to set that of a "divided" nation. (Not our word, but hers, as a careful reading of her message will show.)

But we must say a few words about the future she says is forever now, the past she wants the country to break from, and, yes, even the responsibilities of presidential speechwriters who write messages about the past and the future.

Let's begin with the speechwriting. Isn't there anyone in the President's inner circle who could have pointed out the ludicrous connotations when "future" and "now" are joined together? The satirical Aldous Huxley novel, "Brave New World," did not only give us that unchastible combination; it also gave us a vivid picture of a harrowing future.

Unless President Macapagal-Arroyo wanted to title-grab a plan to reengineer the country's future to turn it into an impossible paradise, her speechwriters did her a disservice. What probably happened is something as other prophetic writers of dystopian fiction, George Orwell, could have predicted: the political writers use of "prefabricated" language—without thinking—to fill in the blanks.

But there is no mistaking who owns the central idea in the President's New Year message; it is, it must be, the President herself. The notion of a complete break with a remote political system entered current public discourse only through Mr. Arroyo's "I am sorry" speech.

There is much to be said for the idea; we do not need a practicing politician to tell us that our political system needs drastic reform or even a complete overhaul. But the President's remarkable attempt to inflict the culture she grew up in and became so good at is ultimately an attempt to evade accountability for more specific acts. By claiming, "The system made all of us do it," she must have hoped to avoid answering for the allegedly wire-tapped conversations with election expert Virgilio Garcillano. But if by her appeal to "break from the past and face a brave new future" she was asking the public to move on and, perhaps, join the "great debate" (again, her words) on Charter change, then we can say with certainty that her appeal will go unheeded.

The reality is, the day of reckoning is still to come. No amount of good news on the macro-economic front will mask that. No act of political legerdemain will realign-ed by push Charter change to the next level unless the Senate is ready. And on tinkering with the political or legislative calendars will alter the fact that, when the dust settles at the 13th Congress opens in July, new impeachment complaints against the President will be filed, and another impeachment trial will be upon us.

That is the future that lies ahead of us; it is neither brave nor new, only inevitable. From the point of view of a functioning democracy, it is also necessary.

In fact, President Arroyo is treading dangerous ground when she wraps her administration's colors around the latest macro-economic numbers. The appreciating peso is a double-edged sword because, of course, a stronger peso also means more expensive Philippine exports and, ironically, lesser purchasing power for OFW families.

Also, respected economists, such as Cielito Habito, have raised superior arguments to explain why they think all may not be well with the domestic economy from one of the government's economic managers has already pointed out the obvious: One reason OFW remittances are an important sous is that domestic growth has not been as robust as expected.

In economics, as in politics, the day of reckoning may be delayed, but it cannot be denied.

Don't believe those predictions

AS I SEE IT

Neal H. Cruz

THIS IS THAT TIME OF THE YEAR WHEN fortune-tellers, psychics, astrologers, augurs, soothsayers, crystal gazers, tarot card readers of all sorts, sages, and wise men come out of the woodwork and predict what's going to happen in the new year. Whatever you call them, they're all the same. Most of them are charlatans, fakes, impostors, frauds, cheats, quacks, pretenders, etc. So nobody can really tell the future, except a tyrannical ruler, plans to murder somebody or a politician planning to cheat in an election. They're all pulling our legs. But media, for lack of anything else better to broadcast or publish during the season, give them their five minutes or several column inches of time. And so they come out at this time like a plague and pretend to tell the future. In so doing, they "lib-erlize" Filipinos and make them believe in superstitions and other forms of bogosah.

They get away with it because when their predictions don't come true during the year, nobody remembers. The media are too preoccupied with listening to more predictions from more fortune-tellers. And when an event is remotely resembling a prediction happens, they let time teller who made that prediction trumpets it to the world and assure him the people forgot it by the time the year ended.

The only person I know whose prediction is coming true is the late dental donor days is—guess who!—President Macapagal-Arroyo.

Four years ago, on Hindi Ito sa Bagsak, she said, as she promised not to run for president in the election of 2004. It was apparently a New Year's Eve. At editorial of the business, "If I were to run, it would require a major political effort on my part. But since I am among the principal figures in the divisive national events of the last two or three years, any political efforts can only serve to deepen the divisions. On the other hand, relieved of the burden of politics, I can devote the last year and a half of my administration to the following: First, strengthening the economy to create more jobs, and to encourage business activity that is unhampered by corruption and red tape in government. Second, healing the deep divisions within our society. Third, working for clean and honest elections in 2004."

Everything that she predicted has come true. Because she broke her promise not to run, the country is now torn apart by "never-ending disturbances." It will not end even with the end of the—fill your, said it will not end in the next year. It will end only when she gives up the presidency but she has usurped.

For instead of "working for clean and honest elections in 2004," she, in a "mighty political effort" with the help of Garci, et al., made it the dirtiest in the history of the Philippines. And although the peso has strengthened—not because of her but because of the remittances of overseas Filipino workers (who have to work in other countries because she has not been able to create more jobs for them)—corruption and red tape are still rampant in government. And instead of "healing the deep divisions in our society," she has, as she predicted, only worsened the divisiveness.

If for this hour is Wednesday, she can do a better job telling fortunes in January.

* * *

While the year is still young, I will hazard a prediction myself (though I admit I can be wrong, considering the characters, traits, **ambition and determination of politicians**): the Senate will not dance the Cha-cha this year. The administration does not have the numbers in the Senate as it has in the House. Cha-cha needs a two-thirds majority to pass in the Senate. There are 23 senators. You need only six votes to defeat it. There are already eight opposition senators, and count of 11. Right now, there are only two senators who are openly for it: Angara and Estrella.

Here's another prediction: Joe de Venecia will not become prime minister this year or the next. Neither will Rolled G Ramos.

And here's another: in the remote possibility that our system of government is changed to parliamentary because of the combined efforts of the Kbw, PDR and JPE, this Gang of Three, this Unholy Trinity will disallow one or another during the elections for prime ministers.

GV thinks he has the full support of his provincemates, PDR, for the prime ministership, but the former may be up for a disappointment. Because he is not disqualified from running, PDR can run for Member of Parliament in his district in Pangasinan. Once in Parliament, enough fellow MPs can be made to elect him PM. Every so long has JDV, PDR can always say: "What can I do? How can I refuse the call of my country?"

PDR and JDV also think that the Other will not support the prime ministership. One would think that she has had her fill of high office after two terms as president. But ambition and delusion know no bounds. Because she is not banned by the proposed Constitution from running, she can run for MP in her district in Pampanga. Once in Parliament, as the immediate former president, she will have the edge in the contest for the position of PM. Sorry na lang kay PDR and JDV.

So you can expect more divisiveness if we change to a parliamentary system.

And here is a final prediction: The presidency of the University of the Philippines will no longer have the respect it used to have. The reputation of the UP presidency will be forever tarnished. Why?

Because only because the UP president allowed himself to be used by politicians for political ends—when he accepted the chairmanship of the Consultative Commission, which was created for only one purpose: to draft an idiotic Constitution made to order for Ate Glue. That's enough to make UP alumni and students puke.

Deeply upright, deeply crooked

THERE'S THE RUB

Conrado de Quiros

ABRAHAM LLEBA HAD HIS INTERESTING point last week. HNS, 12/27/05: He used the people who put up the ad defending to-think-up Fernando Capulla misunderstood my column yesterday. The Quirino I wrote of did not bother "deeply crooked." What he described as "deeply crooked" is the double-faced (religious) practice of Filipinos....What the pastor could have done was to have pointed out to De Quiros where he was wrong—not about the Catholic faith but, indeed, it was plain that De Quiros was grossly misinformed.

First off, my thanks for the spirited defense. It helps to reassure that reading skills have not completely disappeared from this country. Many years of the religious and secular leaders of this country have failed to develop a common task of comprehension, you begin to wonder where we're headed. I'm glad there's Lleba to restore my faith in the future of Philippine literacy.

But I beg to disagree about being grossly misinformed about Catholic faith. I wasn't talking about the Catholic faith as we practice it. I'd say in that column that it was negating to attribute the hypocrisy or double-standards or schizophrenia, however we choose to call it, to the tenets of the Catholic faith as opposed to any Protestantism. I made no such claim and neither was the column either that an external guidance to live a good life. But Latin America is there to show that Catholicism can also inspire liberation and Protestantism can also serve the cause of repression. Long before the Bohemian angel George W. Bush to take out the president of Venezuela, he had been urging Ronald Reagan to take out America's enemies in Nicaragua and El Salvador.

I won't repeat the reasons for saying our practice of the Christian faith is more virulent than materialized, more form than substance. What I will do is go back to my last sin: that the standard is not limited to our practice of faith, it extends to our practice of democracy, our practice of law, the very way we conceive of ourselves as Filipinos.

We have the formal properties of democracy but we do not have the essence of democracy. We have elections, we have a free press, we have civil liberties, but the rich are never jailed for all sorts of crimes, including murder; votes are counted as garbage in public officials and not as funds to give back in roads and bridges; the people are powerless to oust cabinet for grievances. The essence of democracy is a strong people, not a strong republic. A strong people is what we do not have. Indeed, today we have a people that is afraid of the formal properties of democracy. We have elections but the votes are stolen, we have a free press but journalists are murdered for reporting wrongdoing, we have civil liberties but they are included at every turn in the name of fighting crime.

But we point ourselves with hitting a direction in history when we brought the Americans leaving us. It is not unlike a pupil, murdered and unlearned who goes to church in his Sunday best, believing a true One Father's, Hail Mary's and Glory Be's will expunge his soul of sin.

The same is true of law. Somehow still you find more lawyers than in the country, but somehow still you find more lawlessness than in this country. This is a country that believes—or doesn't mind if people believe it or not—that if you go through a legal process, what comes out at the end of it must be legal. What we don't call it really does it negate the fundamental characteristic of a PC garbage in, garbage out. I personally thought I had seen the worst since of law during Marcos' time, when the law was directly conscripted to who see openly for it. Angara and Estrella.

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Five years ago, as a result of the impeachment trial, everybody wanted to be a lawyer once again, with Hilario Davide deserving hearts the law could be used for the holiest ends. Last month, as a result of Virgilio Garcillano's conversation, everybody wanted to be a lawyer again, with Hilario Davide deserving hearts the law could be used for the lowliest ends. Last month, as a result of Virgilio Garcillano's conversation, everybody wanted to be a lawyer again, with Hilario Davide deserving hearts the law could be used for the lowliest ends. But that is government's task today, as it was in Marcos' time: to have the letter of the law, not have law.

It's the central malady of Filipino identity. The only reason thing that happened last year was the attempt to disqualify Fernando Poe Jr. from running for president on the ground that he wasn't a Filipino. As it turned out, of course, the legal gimmick were completely manufactured, the product of extremely mal-tempered minds.

But quite apart from that, it boggled the mind that the one person who had plenty (with defined for several generations of Filipinos when being Filipino meant—big thinking, fights, handles, Tolay Batis, Daniel Romero, Boking Garcia—who's had dreams of a broader and spacious sort in country beyond the call of "homeland"—should be considered a false Filipino. While the one person who had always boasted about studying in the United States and having Bill Clinton for classmate, who flew the flag of America, who was believed by George H. Bush senior to be the one willing to suspend the OFWs in the Middle East to join the fellow's unholy crusade in Iraq, should be adjudged a dyed-in-the-wool, born fide, one-and-one, Filipino.

"Sounds to normal. Or looks good to a person who refuses to see anything good in it. Sorry, it means we have problems, in its worst, it means we're sitchers for appearances. That's what matters in what we are: deeply upright, deeply crooked.

Unleashing the coco potential

COMMENTARY

Rhonda D. Mercurio
Assistant to Church and Social Issues

THE EIGHT TRIUMPH IN THE BBC WORLD Challenge of the Philippines' tourism, a cool reception was made from coconut leaks, non-welcome news for the country and for the coconut industry, down to the The coconut tree—along with the tropical areas by region economic aid in health care, the pervading interest in alternative fuel sources, the livelihood coco-methylester, and the method patented for pesticidal insecticides—points to a brighter future for the economic industry.

Economic analysts recommending to this national economy an average annual savings of $900.3 million during the period 2000-2004, the coconut industry remains in a moribund state, mogged by several problems which are not economically feasible. Among these are low farm productivity, an aging trees and senile plantations, low-tax export prices, lack of research and development and lack of infrastructure support. All these have risks resulted to ensure that coconut farmers are among the Philippines' poorest citizens.

Coconut farmers are the ones who reap meager and have troubles live below the poverty line. A typical coconut farmer earns P11,000 annually or around P29 per day. It is very hard to imagine how a coconut farmer can support a family of six with the kind of income.

To help the farmers and to unleash the potential of the coconut industry, financial resources are undoubtedly needed to fund programs and to address the problems that have long hobbled the industry.

Recently, over forty hard estate presently for development. The levy was initially intended by the Ramos administration to address the crisis brought about by an "abnormal situation in the world market for fuel and oils." However, succeeding presidents of the country like the levy permanent, but eventually it took this source of private funds "to be owned by the coconut farmers in their own private capacities."

Advocates would later show the coco-levy fund would be used not for the farmers' benefit but to serve the business interests of some Marcos cronies. While over forty years, the United Coconut Planters Bank (UCPB) was acquired and used as a springboard to acquire assets and corporations that were used in turn to put the coconut industry under a monopolistic regime. In the early 1980s, the country's government was also used for purposes that had nothing to do with the industry, such as the acquisition of San Miguel Corp. (SMC) shares.

It was not until four years ago, in December 2014, that the Supreme Court ruled in favor of declaring the coco-levy funds as public funds. The high court categorically ruled that the money was public fund. The decision put wow to subsequent fundings. Senate Bill 1145, which recognized the coconut farmers as the owners of coco levy funded assets and corporations.

Despite these court victories, the farmers have yet to actually benefit from the coco levy fund. The funding measure still has to come up under deserving the owners of the coco-levy funds. Judgment on the 27 percent SMC-UCPB (Coconut Industry Investment Fund) shares. Reportedly persons who have vested interests in the coco levy fund refuse to let go of the fund, or parts of it, without a fight. There have been reported attempts to under a compromise deal involving the 27 percent SMC-UCPB shares.

An out-of-court settlement is not acceptable because these shares have already been declared to be held by the government in trust for the farmers. The only thing that is left for the Sandiganbayan to do is to declare the decision final and executory. To strike a compromise deal is to force the very purpose and intent of the law. To compromise is to undermine the accountability of the persons responsible for the "systematic plunder of the coconut industry."

An alarming development is the coco levy recovery efforts, a the removal of three hectare directives from the Department of DOH has November. Aside from being vocal with their anti-corruption campaign against these business dominos were against the attempts to use the still untouched 26-percent block of SMC shares to pay the PCPR loans of the area people. Indeed the coco levy funds, from some dummy shares of the sequestration, than Presidential Majesgal Antonio had a hand in their removal, a move that was obviously personally motivated, drive incurred when the impeachment case was lodged in the House of Representatives.

Public support for the coco levy funds is important inasmuch as unanimous pool of funds that can help the industry and its farmers. All that the government has to do is to facilitate the immediate recovery of the coco levy assets. During the ninth congress of the 1987 Constitution, Senator Juan Ponce Enrile introduced a bill, which was passed that the coconut levy fund reached the staggering amount of P6.935 billion. At present the levy has accumulated to a total of P120 billion. This is a big amount that can go a long way in helping the 25 million people directly and indirectly dependent on the industry. Hopefully, the Aquino administration will finally address the problems of short income ills of the coconut industry and the long-standing hardship in the lives of the millions of coconut farmers.

Keeping the fire burning

KRIS-CROSSING MINDANAO

Antonio J. Henares Jr

HIGH SCHOOL JITTERBUGS SEEM ATTRACTED me. Rather he-hate aversion to me. There were times when I chose to be close here. Many such reasons are rather unpopular of me-selection." Because the old (do-old) style of instruction is out with a generation born old all but I school, some high school students often include activities that are good with the parents involved.

I am proud to say that my own high school dance, the Jitterbug Jamboree, is still held. Predictably is our only problem. We have on the same day each year, every Dec. 29 to 30 (2:00). I do not recall now how the date was chosen. All I know is it has nothing to do with the time of the holy innocents.

The first year was open special. My Xerox Universities Alumni de Gagayan high school class of 1975 had wanted our 10th year to signify the "quiet high time beyond 30." I got a surprise when our classmates decided that instead of having a wild and crazy Christmas party, our class would hold a special lunch only special students.

Influenced in me, our class had started a project with an orphanage that's getting little public and were sensitive because it is run by a government agency. The best prize and finale Center for Child Development's Region 10 office.

The BSSC is not your typical, straightlace organization. It is on the bottom spiritually for children abandoned by parents, disabled children, and children "orphaned" by armed conflicts. Each of the 34 kids we talk at BSSC has a heartbreaking story to tell.

Zoe was left in a garbage dump. Another was left in the mall by her mother. She was left in a church doorstep. Four have either father (medical card) or mother (Social Security System) abroad. One baby boy is blind. A little baby girl has neurofibroma. The only thing they share in common is their love. All love professor, and with Five Philippine Holdings, updated our wealth group.

So we just go about, it was easy to move to those issues who had the acknowledged. Invariably, the answer would refer to Cebu business, president of Philippine Phosphates. As other values, a would be Gov. Lorenzo Antero agriculture secretary. An American-Assistant, Bayer Steward, was already supporting nine poor college students when our group decided to adopt two more children. This time, Special Care agreed to be our mission's sponsor.

"Service club isn't a beggar, an extortion, and a pay-more. But what do you call a society that has endured me to this, sure?" A Brazilian clergyman this question some years back. The Spanish-Catholic priest was referring to the core problem of our society. The conversationalists as the reunion at times agreed to the Gloria-Gary types. Many are not 100% true, excluding myself. But 100% holding to me the evidence. Neither is it the opinion that we are a happy nation, even in the large headlines and equally drawn to be honest real.

Things are going wrong because of a society that has no more place for God. The day we put God in the center of a society that thanks no more God in our life. Before in our country, we were moral nuns, that will be the day when children will no longer be abandoned by their parents.

The third volume of Capitol University's (CU) Dialogue Journal is now available in most stalls of the town. The volume's special issue on ethnicity has interviews and papers of Dr. Milagros Ibanez of the IP School of Labor and Industrial Relations, Dr. Jo Rodica Nuyda, Dr. Benjamin "Dagang" de los Reyes, Dyangkan, Dr. Nimrod Bautista, and others. Copies have been sent to the universities and personalities around the country. Additional copies are available at the CU Library.

Communication@cu.edu.ph

Refocusing on Roxas

THE LONG VIEW

Manuel L. Quezon III

MANILA, Roxas (AI) IF IN THE MIDDLE (above, he found a song) the public turned become called up on "NOW," it would which seem "Normal?", crimes remain much maligned by the few people who have not forgotten him completely. But Roxas remains an important example of the modern charismatic leader—more than, say, Ramon Magsaysay or Ferdinand Marcos in the Republic. But I think Magsaysay, like his predecessor Manuel Quezon and successor Ferdinand Aquino, were lucky accidents for our country. They could succeed only once and cannot be applied to emulated. They were all extraordinary and flawed men, with extraordinary personalities.

It is useless to expect another Roxas, though. This is so because the Quezon-type of leadership ("Cuando pancakes," some called it) was made obsolete by Magsaysay's version of strong-man rule. Magsaysay, who left Quezon's side in his being the lobbyist par excellence to the United States, where he being a success possibly made him more acceptable than the Chinese-Filipino mestizo of the past. He was the Filipino bodyguard to Quezon in various and, of course, the Filipino stand-in for the American boss. Magsaysay's story has changed the way leaders communicate with their constituents. But after his assassination, Magsaysay's style of leadership—the one-only-way leaders could hold on to power was through the time-honored methods of patronage, bamboo and cash.

So Don't Aquino's case, she was the right one not necessarily the best one. Her popular support and moral authority she personified "political miracle" by political effect, unless there is a second political atmosphere.

On the other hand, Roxas, who derived a great deal of his success from his being young and brilliant, was also a victim of circumstance in his economic determinant, and that was why a lot of voters decided never to see Roxas because President Roxas in foreign who was too old when he ran for presidency.

Roxas was the standard-bearer of the politics of his day, famous and in contrast which portrayed him as a leader born to other time, and presiding over the illusion of which he became speaker at the age of 36. He was, in other words, a man of his time, speaker, a true top-notcher. When he rose to the legislature against Osmeña-Roxas-Quirino and their supporters ended in Roxas' removal from the speakership, he declared that he was fulfilling from his position of power into the ranks of his opponents, and he was applauded by the members who packed the opposition's gallery.

Unfortunately, Roxas's decision—something of a commitment to history because of a view of the role of by the late columnist J.V. Cruz, who called it "the Roxas Line of 1947." The conventional wisdom is that Roxas has been forgotten not because the Nacionalistas want it so for the historic Roxas's days a man for us. But President Roxas, despite his amazing intelligence and intellectual background, was really unaware of the historical role he was playing. He was not a leader who knew what he stood to do was to come back the death of history, he dealt with the immediate problems as if the Philippines were an American colony and the Filipinos the most loyal subjects of the United States. The Roxas Administration's policy of favors and appointees which assisted those administrations—the Bell Trade Act, the Parity Amendment, the Bases Agreement of 1947—contained the "crimes against nationalism." This became the controversial view taught in most schools.

As time passes by, the controversial view that Roxas was an American stooge may be facing a serious challenge. One example of how a controversial issues of Roxas' actions can result in a move by a vile appointed of him can be pleased from the late Ben Bautista II. Bautista's article in Philippine Author, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1947, entitled "Roxas Speaks to You, Osmeña and Roxas" and the American Military Presence in the Philippines." In the article, Bautista is aware the development of the Philippine government's attitude towards the American bases. Quezon, who had nothing against retaining bases, and Osmeña, who had opposed them, which allowed military bases on land to relay on support for his "anti-position". Roxas had to settle defended it.

Later, during World War II, Quezon would ask Roxas to go to Japan to collaborate with the Japanese occupation regime. Roxas refused to allow Osmeña and Roxas and the American Military Presence in the Philippines." In the article, Bautista is aware the development of the Philippine government's attitude towards the American bases. Quezon, who had nothing against retaining bases, and Osmeña, who had opposed them, which allowed military bases on land to relay on support for his "anti-position". Roxas had to settle defended it.

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Teacher quality

THE "EDUCATION REVOLUTION" PERSON GEN. GINGER the Foundation for Worldwide People Power (FWPP), starting Oct. 12, 2002, is a "running revolution."

Figuratively, one large power with advocacy. One of whom is "community action," where education stakeholders—mentoring parents, local business, and private citizens, like you and me—work hand-in-hand with their school leaders to make quality education a continuing community pursuit by and-to-year.

We already talked briefly about some massive action in our previous columns [illegible] any, although we did not tell you every. Eugenio Lopez Jr. spoke about it; we will do so in future issues.

COMMENTARY

Eugenio Lopez Speaks!

Today, let's talk about the other leg of the Education Revolution, called "Mentoring the Mentors." Good act, as which I say it is, right or left. You see, both are essential, and complexly important as each other just like the legs of SEA players: global medalists Eduardo Buenaventura and Hidilyn Diaz.

What exactly is Mentoring the Mentors?

The program is a true "Teacher Quality Initiative" that goes beyond plain teacher training.

The experienced league-and-eight educators and highly instructional teachers conducted a four-day period. The secret here enough space to delve into educational description of each module.

Rather it is to say that the master series of sessions aims to in-involve the process of "Mentoring" as a new approach to focused learning and well-managed professional development.

Dr. Eve Medina, the Mentoring the Mentors' national coordinator, says that "behind every successful person, there is someone, somewhere, somehow who cared about his or her growth and development. This person was the mentor."

Dr. Medina's point brings us to the real meaning of "teacher quality."

The teacher exerts a major influence on the young learner's personality development, often as profound as that of the parents. Aside from her mastery of the subject matter, the teacher's personality traits, her likes and dislikes, even her moods and attitudes, all have bearing on the child's character formation.

In pursuing teacher quality, the Mentoring the Mentors Program pays equal importance to skill and knowledge. The assumption that a teacher seeks to improve learning outcomes from only one part of the equation. Her commitment to inspiring children with confidence and positive values in her words completes the picture.

The Mentoring the Mentors Program's training design is very flexible and highly adaptive. In the course of three years, the FWPP has conducted outreach here-for sessions for various groups of teachers and supervised them under the supervision of Education. In other times, our sessions have been expanded to be more relevant for the family of schools and courses dedicated to one-on-one formation or interaction.

And how did Mentoring the Mentors come to life?

It all started in a dinner party I [illegible] for noted bubble Mr. Dante Bolipata-Rufino. The event was jointly hosted and we got to be subject of what Mr. Rufino's Manila Bay-area barrister—found in Assumption San Lorenzo—has been doing there days.

It was not long before Mr. Rufino [illegible] mentoring as we, as only effective teacher formation program for Assumption schools nationwide. He, then reader, Assumption educators schools can be found at his as in the boardwalk of Cubao proper.

The conversation took a very interesting turn when Mr. Rufino started to detail [illegible] the Assumption through the education system. Mr. Rufino—or Dante, as she prefers to be called—as we introduced us to Mr. Lito Cruiz Dagdag of the Center for Leadership and Change.

Not long after, we were privileged to meet Dr. Celia Ishiwata-Angel [for Mindanao, both working closely with the University of the Philippines. The two shared our belief that quality education is the key to genuine change and that the teachers have a crucial role in this regard. The two educators, now surprisingly—also have quite considerable of very notable teaching skills and ideas.

When Dante, Celia, and I first got together, it was as if a line was in. And the needs of the Education Revolution was seen.

In 2003, principals and [illegible] teachers from all 39 public schools in the Iloilo City schools division led by Mrs. Ida Ledesma—their superintendent at the time—participated in the pilot implementation of the FWPP's Teacher Quality Initiative: the Mentoring the Mentors Program.

Since then, Dante, Celia, Boy and Lito have been all over the country, from Baguio X and II in Mindanao, Region VI and VII in the Visayas and Region IV in Luzon.

As of this writing, over 2,000 educators—from Depkid school principals and master teachers to superintendents and regional directors to the deans and heads of "teacher education institutions"—have joined the Education Revolution through the Mentoring the Mentors Program.

The Mentoring the Mentors Program is a key example of how-to-use for the private sector. As the term implies, this new "mentors-in-training" program an action plan which they execute to implement when they resume their duties at their respective schools. For instance:

Bacoor City Science Division

"I will personally and professionally reach out to my fellow teachers and the community" to make them conscious of how important quality education is for the community as a whole. Ms. Elena Dumlao.

"I will consistently look into the improvement of my pupils' learning." - Ms. Perla Rafael.

Batangas City Schools Division

"Hindi ako lang makinabang sa pagbabag ng mga kaisipan upang maging makabuluhan, makatotohanan, makatao at makabayan" [I commit to help our youth become God-centered, environment-conscious and respectful of the rights of others as individuals and in one people]. - Ms. Josefa Alcasid.

"I will strive to reach out to the community the importance of being a leader in the school." - Ms. Gemma Tenorio.

CABAGA region

"I will become an advocate of change, since I see this as a serious problem not just in our school or country, but in the entire country as well." - Mr. Cordero Dolor.

"I shall always project a cheerful disposition, smile and pave the people because I want my pupils to learn by example." - Ms. Rebecca Ramos.

Pinatili, from the Bicol City Schools Division

"I should be the model [for change] and then it should start with me." - Ms. Vivian Santiago.

"I will do everything I can to set more facilities and teaching aids for the pupils so my school is what you [call] a classmate." - Ms. Arnelia Ruiz.

The action plans are as diverse as the participants' backgrounds but they have a common goal: quality education through quality teaching.

What a way to treat heroes

THESE DAYS WE ALWAYS READ IN newspapers about how the remittances of overseas Filipino workers strengthen the peso and boost the economy in such a way that President Macapagal Arroyo has declared the Philippine peso as the strongest currency in Asia, if not in the whole world. To us this was exaggerating would be putting it mildly.

In reality, those long-suffering OFWs are hired at modern-day heroes. But what a pity the government can't improve its performance and create jobs for them at home, so they wouldn't have to be separated from their families for years on end.

Of course, the poor OFWs have to suffer for being heroes because while their hard-earned dollars have strengthened the peso, to the Philippines, the same dollars now buy less because of inflation. To rub salt on the wounds, some local airlines increased the domestic air fares during the holidays season, when quite a number of OFWs were traveling on leave.

For instance, a few weeks ago, two domestic airlines were charging about 15,000 for a one-way trip to Cagayan de Oro. A week later, the fare went up to 18,000, yet bird prices were going down! This was the fare of P3,000 each way within a week! So much for the special fares made advertised by the two companies.

I inquired about the Manila-Cagayan de Oro fare of P3,000, as advertised by an airline in the face. Ummm of the location. However, the company's sales person could not even say on what day that fare rate would be available! So much for media-advertising!

Much worse, as soon as OFWs step out of the arrival area of any international airports, they have to deal with a mafia-like syndicate who operate the various "airport armchair" taxis, but whose fares are at least three times higher than those of metered taxis that are conveniently banned by the airport management from entering the arrival area, to protect the business of the "exclusive monopoly" of the operators.

What a way to treat our modern-day heroes.

—ROBERT DEL Mangaratem, Pangasinan

On with education, no to corruption

SOMEHOW, THE DECISION TO SAVE and enter a child should be made based on how well the parents can answer the question: Do we have both the dedication and the financial capability to support a family?

Unfortunately, I can say that the two factors are among in are not so conscious about the question as we want them to be because they lack proper education and, therefore, they cannot fully understand the social responsibilities that come with parenthood and raising a child.

In other words, the Philippines is overpopulated because a lot of our countrymen are not properly educated.

I know of a man who was hired as a janitor-caretaker. Let's just call him Fred. He was provided with living quarters by his employer inside the family compound. He has been working for that family for years. He is by any measure a hardworking man, always ready to do this or that for anyone living inside the compound.

Now, Fred has a son. He already had four daughters. But he and his wife wanted—and was praying for—a son. Their next baby still turned out to be a girl. He would be reminded from time to time of how hard he or she was getting every time his family grew, but Fred brushed those reminders aside as he was determined to have a son. Eventually he got one.

But soon thereafter, his eldest daughter, at the age of 16, eloped with a tricycle driver. She is now the mother of three children. The next year his second daughter, 18 years old then, followed suit, also with another tricycle driver. She has her own two children now and is on her third pregnancy. A few years later, the third daughter, aged 17 then, also eloped with an ice vendor. She has now a 1-month-old baby.

Then Fred became the father of another son, his seventh child.

If Fred were better schooled, he would have understood the responsibilities involved in raising a family. He would have sought better employment and he would, more probably, have fewer children. And his children would have been better provided for and educated and less inclined to eloping or marrying at a very young age. The list is endless.

We often hear news reports on how hard our government has been working to boost our economy. Every now and then, we have officials call on local entrepreneurs to open new job opportunities. But if the opportunities are available, wouldn't people quickly grow their lack of education?

However, if the government would invest more in the education of our country's youth, then, in the future, we would have within our hands a vast human resource qualified for employment. And if our officials would provide the atmosphere conducive for investment—and stop the corruption that discourages entrepreneurs—then all would be well.

—MARIE LAURENT S. HENDRIA, J. Fluvier, Sandalat Homesite, San Rafael, Bulacan City

Pedal-power commuting

THIS IS ABOUT THE ARTICLE "EXTRA challenge: 120 km in 5 days." (INQ, 11/04/05) And to the three very brave souls who rode the bike to write that article. I say: thank you. I'd like to see the day when the majority of the commuters in Metro Manila move around in bicycles.

I chose to work and, in the early morning, I ran see a few brave souls commuting to their work on all sorts of bicycles (Mount bikes, fatty's, hybrids, etc). This is a start, but it would go a long way if they and their mode of transportation would be given enough positive media coverage. A large number of blue- and white-collar workers might just get interested and become enough courage to take "pedal-power commuting" more seriously.

Needless to say, government support should also be in place in terms of having the right infrastructure, road-sharing laws and protection of cyclists' rights.

—ALDRIN CHRISTOPHER DOMINGO, architect-apprentice@gmail.com

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The problem is the politicians not the existing Constitution

SOMEHOW, GLORIA MACAPAGAL-Arroyo has touched the creation of the Consultative Commission because of the "Media Envoi" scandal. Its real objective was to nullify a nation who wanted to oust her. Precisely, the ConCom was meant to accommodate former President Ramos and appease him. At the time—who both one on that critical night of July 8, when the Ramos regime was about to fall, an excellent opportunity to topple Charter change was wrapped up by using GMA a graceful exit by calling short her term of office to 2007—so they would not join the streets calls.

Many fell for the ruse. Now, the ConCom has this new unpalatable "extension" proposal for all-elective police officials whose terms are expiring in 2007.

For GMA, her political helpers and media apologists, the proposal is a win-win situation. If the people don't agree to the proposal, then GMA stays. If the people approve it, then GMA can stay longer in power, as prime minister, of course. Politicians are most likely to go all-out for the approval since their terms will be extended. Either way, GMRs term is not on stake. Talay ang tigpas.

I may be cynical, but I think we're better off with the present Constitution. We don't need a new constitution to pull us forward. We just need to get rid of the politicians who are dragging us down.

—PERRY ROJAS, 9111 Bonifacio, San Juan, Metro Manila

Editorial polemics

I'M GLAD THAT THE INQUIRER AGREES that "Bonifacio and Rizalists suffered sinister harassment from the elite could not stop the idea of a state of the nation's leading them"; and that there are many "similarities between Bonifacio and Aguinaldo." However, the Inquirer editorial (POI, 12/28/05) emphasized historically irrelevant dissimilarities and enumerated the policies concerning President Ramos's "incendiary" and so called lack of work ethic.

Here are further similarities between Ing and Bonifacio.

First, the Edsa 2 elite wanted to oust, sans Erap. If Erap did not experience a "similar fate" (try and find out) like Ninoy (sans Edsa 1) was watched by the entire world and the Filipino masses. In 1897, the Cavite elite successfully eliminated Bonifacio because he was not in his territory and no one nonmasa manifested any interest in the crisis. However, if Erap would be condemned and executed like death by lethal injection, his fate would be no different from that of Bonifacio.

The second similarity is both Bonifacio and Erap were denied leadership roles by the elite because of their being "uneducated." Bonifacio is an accused of plundering the funds of the Katipunan and stealing the rifles of Aguinaldo's "government," when all of those really belonged to Bonifacio and his soldiers.

Aguinaldo called him "a trait man." As mentioned in the editorial, Mabuhay and other historians refused to act a coward. The elite now pretend to act a coward. The same way was still serving because it was written some 30 years after the crime, at a time when Bonifacio's murder was being strongly condemned. It was not exercised by "majority" of the people but instead with the courage displayed by those facts during his arrest and trial, for which we have contemporaneous primary sources.

The third similarity concerns the conspiracy, as Tejeros, the elite wanted to establish a "republic" and elect a new leadership—"republic" and elect a new leadership—instead of continuing the Katipunan setup of the state. All that Aguinaldo could do was to swear to positions prepared by Bonifacio's followers. Smoking: Risk on fans, he would (again) establish a "republic," only for the purpose of surrendering the Revolution to the Spaniards. Edsa 1 supposedly required "new politics" and a "strong republic." What the Edsa 1 elite apparently really wanted was exactly that which they unjustly accused Erap of—i.e., institutionalizing the loot through the 2004 elections, and subsequently sweeping this up and dismissing the impeachment complaint.

I do not agree that President Erap did nothing during his presidency. I hope the Inquirer's editors will read my book, which shows how unfair and unjustified the accusations are. In my considered opinion, Erap's presidency was a success—and would have been more successful had the elite not prevented him from carrying out his programs for the poor, and sabotaged his efforts to get the economy in order.

—DR. JESUS ESCALAS, jk_jesus@hotmail.com,

Across the NATION

Text or your feedback: inquirer.net text/sig/vip message to 2327 (Globe) or 282 (Smart). Assistant Editor Tony Bergonia

Mayors told: Don't blame Lafayette

LEGAZPI CITY—ALBAY GOV. FERNANDO GONzales cautioned local officials against blaming the Lafayette mine spill for allegedly contaminating the waters along the coastal town of Sorsogon.

Gonzales said that, as an active member of the monitoring team, he knew that all reports—including the contamination of detergents used by Lafayette personnel—were being monitored and studied.

"Our findings show the company does not use mercury in processing the ores," he said.

Gonzales and Polangui Vice Mayor Benito Bonto should not blame the mine spill for the fish scare that had affected the coastal towns of Sorsogon, Bonto's town in particular.

The Albay governor said determining the source of mercury would put to rest the issue of Lafayette's culpability in the contamination.

Gonzales said the withdrawal of Lafayette's mining operation would take away very significant investment and employment opportunities, not to mention the taxes and dues the mining firm pays to the provincial government.

Last Wednesday, protesters, led by Bonto and Sorsogon City Mayor Sally Lee, staged a "funeral rally" assailing the mine for the fish scare contamination that caused fish kills and triggered a fish scare in Albay and Sorsogon.

Some of the operations of the Lafayette Philippines Inc. (LPI) have been suspended pending final study or findings of the independent monitoring team formed by the Mines and Geosciences Bureau.

LPI executives said they were supporting an investigation of the cause of the contamination of bodies of water in Sorsogon in a bid to prove its transparency to the firm's operations.

The firm said it has started repairs in its waste-discharge system following the leak of cyanide into several bodies of water in five pueblos town in Albay where the mining site is located.

The mining firm also vowed to cooperate with operations to prosper and individuals in a bid to make the mining project as transparent as possible.

Mining has generated at least 1,000 new jobs in the Bicol region and it promised to generate more than 2,000 more this year.

Beyond's Juan, MGB Bicol regional director, said the jobs generated were in accordance with President Macapagal-Arroyo's commitment to ensure more employment opportunities in the mining sector in Bicol.

Residents of Bapo-Bapo, where Lafayette operates, were among the beneficiaries of new jobs.

The Bapo-Bapo Polymetallic Project will be the first large-scale metal mine to be developed and operated under the Mining Act of 1995, according to Leon Juan Fernandez Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

THIRSTY

Dogs relax outside a house in Central Philippines in Bontoc, Mountain Province, getting better treatment from their owners as the year 2006 is (hole), according to Chinese astrology.

Report says household wastes caused fishkills

CALAUAN, LAGUNA—EXCESSIVE quantities of household organic wastes, and not excretions from industrial firms, killed fish in San Pedro town here and Muntinlupa City recently, according to the Laguna Lake Development Authority (LLDA).

In an interview with the Inquirer Thursday, Jerry Carandang of the LLDA's Public Information Unit, said that contrary to common belief, the cause of the fishkills in Barangay Sucol, Mamatid in City and Barangay Cayabu, San Pedro, Laguna in early November was the high level of wastes from households and decayed parts of water hyacinths.

Carandang said the LLDA, including local government units and non-government organizations, is now promoting it in a massive educational campaign to promote better systems in disposing of organic wastes coming from households.

He cited scientific studies that organic wastes from households comprised 75 percent of the total amount of pollutants that are thrown into the lake.

An earlier report attributing the Calauan said that tests from water samples collected by the LLDA from Sucol and Cayabu and from near the fishkill sites showed that "excess due to very low level of dissolved oxygen in the water" caused the fishkills. Romeda Peria, PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

Solcom tells traders to reject NPA taxation

LUCENA CITY—THE SPOKESPERSON of the military's Southern Luzon Command based here in Camp Nakar appealed to businessmen not to give in to the communist New People's Army rebels' imposed taxation.

Army Maj. Jose Imao, Solcom spokesperson, said that while it is understandable that most of the businessmen give in because of fear, "they should not hesitate to ask help and protection from proper government authorities."

Imao also warned businessmen that the NPA will continue to bleed them dry if they continue to provide money and kinds of support to the "enemy of the state."

"The rebel's gun boogie with the money is also being used against anyone who will refuse to pay" he said.

He said government authorities would also file corresponding criminal charges against business groups or individuals persons or be supportive of the NPA through the payment of the so-called revolutionary tax. Joelle F. Mallari Jr., PDI Southern Luzon Bureau

GMA PR team reassesses performance

BAGUIO CITY—PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL-Arroyo met the government's communications team for a yearend evaluation of its failure to promote her administration's successes.

But the meeting decided to ignore the "Hello Garci" controversy that was ignited when Press Secretary Ignacio Bunye released allegedly intercepted conversations between Ms Arroyo and an election official this year. Executive Secretary Eduardo Ermita told reporters in a press conference at the presidential Mansion here.

The so-called controversy is bound to dog the government, Ermita said, but the Palace has decided to distance itself from the controversy while the Senate and the House of Representatives finalize their report based on several inquiries into the tapes and their contents.

Ermita said the communications team has assured the President that mechanisms have been instituted which will screen lies and talk radio against hate-wiretapping attempts.

Whodunnit

He said it was clear in the Palace that the wiretapping operation was conducted by members of the military.

Ms Arroyo said she met with Bunye, Ermita, Secretary Renato Velasco, director general of the Philippine Information Agency, and Cirpa Bernardo, head of the government media group.

She also asked Secretary Silvestre Afable, head of the peace panel negotiating with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, and Environment Secretary Michael Defensor to join the evaluation meeting from 1:30 p.m. here.

Afable was Palace communications director when the "Hello Garci" tapes first surfaced in June. Defensor is also a Cabinet spokesperson for Ms Arroyo during the presidential campaign in 2004.

Priorities

Ms Arroyo, on Tuesday night, said her agenda plans for 2006 begins with a government streamlining program and a lobby for constitutional reforms to attack poverty and revive the economy. She said 2006 would also require her administration to secure peace in Mindanao and reform the country's revolving pension program.

Ermita said the team was tasked with presenting these government targets.

He said the team acknowledged its faults during the meeting with Ms Arroyo, but he did not enumerate them during the press briefing. Vincent Cabreza, PDI Northern Luzon Bureau

Bohol folk ready hero's burial for Pinay soldier slain in Iraq

By Dionisio Magdaraog
PDI Visayas Bureau

TUBIGON, BOHOL—FOR making Bohol proud because she proved to be a true "kalilwan ni Inagbuyo" in devotion of Inagbuyo), US Army Sgt. Melo Lamayog Maravillosa will be honored as a returning hero when her body arrives in Tagbilaran City next week.

Bohol Gov. Edgar Chatto immediately said Maravillosa's body arrives on Christmas Eve in Cebu but as the latter does not proud that she showed bravery and courage in serving her adoptive country the United States.

Maravillosa, who died in Iraq on Dec. 23 when a roadside bomb exploded near her convoy, was one of the soldiers of the Philippine contingent to Iraq ... ("the women") to Iraq ..." the governor added.

Arroyo said he would lead the provincial government officials in giving honors to Maravillosa upon the arrival of her body in Tagbilaran City.

Arroyo said he would also ask Mayor Josephine Socorro Sotto of Inabanga, the town where Maravillosa originally hailed before she migrated to Hawaii in 1997, to hold metrological services for Maravillosa.

MARAVILLOSA

"The provincial government will give Sgt. Melo Lamayog Maravillosa a hero's welcome because of her bravery and courage in serving her adoptive country the United States," Governor Edgar Chatto said.

Maravillosa was 32 years old when she left Barangay U-ag, Inabanga to join her mother, Estrellita, who had immigrated to Hawaii. She later joined the US military after she passed the enlisting.

Her relatives in Barangay U-ag confirmed that her body will arrive next week, but there was no specific date yet.

Lucresia Lamayog Maquerma, her first cousin, said families has yet to call them again on the date of the arrival.

Families warned her daughter buried at the U-ag public cemetery near the site of the grave of Filipino grandfathers Agapito Lamayog.

Look Younger Than Your Old Photos

GMA wants Halsema repair rushed

BAGUIO CITY—PRESIDENT Macapagal-Arroyo ordered the Department of Public Works and Highways to speed up repairs of a section of the Halsema Highway which links this city to other parts of Benguet and Mt. Province.

During the 100th Rizal Day rites here on Friday, the President asked Marites Kiapkas, DPWH Cordillera director, about the finishing dates of the highway's rehabilitation, which Mr. Arroyo said she wants completed in honor of her father, the late President Diosdado Macapagal. Mr. Arroyo said the improvement of Halsemaraan started during her father's incumbency in the 1960s.

Abalos said the government has spent P1.4 billion to complete portions of the highway.

He promised Mr. Arroyo that a full report and a comprehensive financial profile of the projects will be submitted at the start of the year to help accelerate work on the incomplete projects, according to Baguio Councilor Leandro Yangot, Victoria Cabiroan, PIO Northern Luzon Bureau

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FRUITFUL
Pasalan and sarcena fruits are endemic in the Cordillera hinterlands and become expensive because of a New Year's belief that round fruits bring good luck.

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Globe QUEST
The new pace of business

METRO
Editor Ernor G. Dipasupil

Water rates up this month

By Christine Gaylican

THE METROPOLITAN WATERWORKS AND Sewerage System (MWSS) has approved an upward tariff adjustment of P1.66 per cubic meter for next year's customers living serviced by the Maynilad Water Services Inc.

The new rate will take effect on the second week of January.

For a household consuming an average of 30 to 50 cubic meters a month, the new adjustment will mean an average increase of P1.66 to P3.00.

Water concessionaire Maynilad Water Services Inc. also announced that its P13.60 to P53

INFOTECH

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Edited by Lee Magno

3G in RP: Looking back and looking ahead

By Erwin Oliva
Contributor

3G took a lot of turns and passed many speed bumps down the road leading toward the Philippines

FINALLY, THE NATIONAL TELECOMMUNICATIONS Commission (NTC) has announced that three—and only three—companies stand to be rulers and regulations—operators have been granted government licenses to operate third-generation (3G) mobile networks.

These incumbents and one new player are expected to launch their services next year as they leap into the next generation of mobile phone service where mobile Internet, multimedia and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services are also expected to be offered.

While the launch to 3G has somehow soured in recent years, now for the strong opportunities by local operators to jump into this so-called "network upgrade," industry pundits believe that 3G will eventually happen in the country. It is only a question of when 3G services will become mainstream.

Smart Communications Inc., the wireless subsidiary of Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., said it has started rapidly deploying its 3G mobile network nationwide following the awarding of 3G frequencies by the NTC.

The mobile operator demonstrated earlier its own 3G service in Cebu through a video call to Manila, and so a roaming international subscriber of Telecom Italia Mobile. Hutchison Telecom also made its own 3G test at this year's national advertising congress, signaling that the battle was on.

Those 3G wars were made months after lawyers of both companies insisted that the country is not yet ready for 3G. Both mobile operators, who now control majority of the local market for mobile phone services, said deploying 3G was too costly for them. They also argued that 3G handsets were still expensive and only a few people could afford it.

However, as the lawyers tried to head off competition that is expected to come from newer players, Smart and Globe joined the bidding for 3G licenses, which was initiated by the NTC despite strong opposition from the incumbents. On the afternoon of Dec. 28, 2005, the NTC busted its decision, saying that Smart, Globe, Digital Telecommunications and Connectivity Unlimited Resources Enterprises Inc. (Cure) were all being granted 3G licenses.

Smart and Globe have issued separate statements revealing that 3G tests have been ongoing prior to the granting of the government licenses.

"We have been testing a number of 3G cell sites and can now provide customers on a trial basis in Metro Manila and Metro Cebu. What's more, we have already widened the network infrastructure needed to accelerate nationwide 3G coverage at the shortest possible time," Smart president and CEO Napoleon Nazareno said.

Nazareno vowed that Smart would repeat the rapid rollout that the operator accomplished in deploying its analog and GSM network infrastructure.

"We are in 36 for real," the Smart executive added.

After getting a perfect score on a grading system used by the NTC to gauge the capability of local operators to seamlessly and effectively provide 3G services, Smart was assigned the 15 Megahertz radio frequency band allocation, the company said.

Globe, on the other hand, was granted the 10 MHz band, the company noted in a separate statement.

"We are bullish about this new development. In our company as we get ready to provide the 3G experience to you, would greatly benefit our valued customers. This year, we extensively worked on our 3G offering. Globe successfully completed its first 3G video calls in July and has complied with all the NTC's 3G requirements by October (2005)," said Rodolfo Salalima, Globe senior vice president for corporate and regulatory affairs.

Meanwhile, Smart hastened that the company had started preparations for a seamless transition to 3G as early as five years ago.

Smart in cooperation with Nokia Networks conducted the first successful 3G video call in the country in the presence of NTC officials in 2000. Using experimental equipment, the test call recorded data transfer rates of up to 2.16 Mbps, the company said.

Antonio Rita, head of Smart's network services division, said the company has made preparations for the new migration to 3G.

"The installation of the mobile-GSM equipment by nearly two Smart's overall 3G preparations. Now that the 3G equipment is available, the 3G capability of these base stations can be readily activated, greatly simplifying the rollout of 3G infrastructure," Nazareno added.

3G provides faster transmission speeds that make possible high bandwidth applications such as video calls and video streaming. Browsing the Internet and downloading large files would be faster values using 3G, as this network upgrades full mobility.

A recent survey by the Global mobile Supplier Association indicated that there are now 100 3G/WCDMA networks in 42 countries worldwide.

WCDMA is one of the global standards which enables the provision of enhanced mobile multimedia services such as music, TV, video, rich entertainment content and Internet access.

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Virus makers got wiser in 2005

By Alexander Villafania
Contributor

AUTHORS OF MALICIOUS SOFTWARE—viruses, Trojan horses, and worms—began writing up to 2005 as rewarded malefactors applied their technical savvy for profiteering and scamming, according to software security maker Trend Micro.

Trend Micro also predicts more individualistic in 2006 as malware makers are lured by increased worldwide usage of the Internet and new social engineering techniques to take advantage of for their purposes.

Despite predictions of rampant worm activity in 2006, the company admitted that the only prominent trend was the more criminal malware for profit. Many of these attacks were launched through phishing, i.e. sending spam e-mail that tend to have come from a legitimate source but are really an attempt by scammers to capture personal data.

Both phishing and Trojan horses consist of gathering account information, user names, and passwords for bank, e-mail, online gaming and online shopping accounts, Trend Micro said. A critical main approach to capturing important files or data by aiming at persons with computers or government offices.

In such cases, malware exploiting a small flaw also learned to harm the chances of detection by covering or killing their phishing sites in a few days. Trojan horses, on the other hand, are remote underwriters to a computer for larger periods and wireless sending private information.

Trend warns that Trojan horses could become more specialized and are more likely to be discovered, prompting malware authors to continue making more Trojan horse class viruses or worms, most of which are easily detected and eradicated.

"By combining these elements: the promise of illicit profit from spammers and phishers, and the fallibility of human users from worms, the malware malaise of today have achieved what the first Trojans horses ever did: run rampant with destroying the city, now it is looking after everywhere."

SPORTS

E-mail to sports@inquirer.com.ph

Editor Rodolfo S. Plaridel Jr.

WHAT'S INSIDE

- James, Cavaliers bring '07 game, cool off red-hot Pistons /A18
- New York Giants cop NFC east division crown /A19
- Bench warmer comes to the fore /A20

JOE DEVANCE: Rap's rookie pick is ahead in the statistical race.

Flashy Fil-Ams rule the roost in PBL wars

By Jaycinto W. Papa

EVEN IF THERE'S ONLY A HANDFUL OF THEM, THESE young Filipino-Americans are dominating the Philippine Basketball League (PBL).

Consistently flashing their all-around game, Joe Calven Devance of rollie-dwelling Tanduay Gin and Kelly Williams of league-leading Magnolia Ice Cream-Admiral vaulted to the top three places in the race for the top individual honors in the Fiesta Cup which resumes with a double-header on Saturday.

Devance, a product of University of Texas-El Paso, grabbed the top spot by ranking third in scoring with 33.7 points per game and second in rebounds with 10 boards per game.

The 6-foot-7 sensei, this season's No. 1 rookie draft pick, also finished fourth in blocks with 2.6 per game and averaged 1.4 in steals.

Williams, who, just like Devance played for a US NCAA Division I team at Oakland University, took the third spot in the overall statistical race.

The flashy 6-foot-7 forward led the league in rebounds with 11 rpg and scored 11.3 ppg.

The 23-year-old Williams, together with teammate Arwind Santos, were credited for the Wizards' spectacular 7-1 run as the tournament nears the semifinal round.

Stepping up for the local cagers was veteran Jojo Tenghoy, who landed second overall after topping the scoring department with a 19.6 point average. Rain or shine's 6-foot-1 forward also tallied 7 rebounds and 2.5 assists.

Rounding up the top five were two spitfirish guards from Hapee-Philippine Christian U.

Jason Castro averaged a fourth-best 13.2 points with 3.1 rebounds, while Mark Wenneu registered 6.4 ppg and led both in assists at 3 apg and steals at 2.6 spg.

Other top performers were Rob Reyes, Harbour Centre's own Fil-Am standout, 27.8 ppg and 8.3 rpg); Mark-Anre Isaacs (6.5 ppg, 8.1 rpg and 2.4 bpg); second finisher of Magnolia (13.8 ppg and 9.4 rpg); and Far Eastern Insurance's Allan Gamboa (5.4 ppg and 6.3 rpg) and Mark Yee (7.9 ppg and 5.9 ppg).

STANDINGS	W	L
Magnolia	7	1
Air 21	7	1
Red Bull	5	3
Coca-Cola	5	3
Sta. Lucia	5	3
Harbour Centre	4	4
Tanduay	4	4
Barangay Ginebra	4	4
Shell	4	5
Far Eastern	3	5
Welcoat	2	6
Hapee	2	6
Rain or Shine	1	7

TODAY'S GAME - Game 1
(San Andres Gym)
2 p.m. — Barangay Ginebra vs. Tanduay
4 p.m. — Magnolia vs. Hapee

KELLY Williams leads in rebounds.

Paragua now a Super GM, barges into Fide's Top 100

GRANDMASTER MARK PARAGUA yesterday became the first Filipino to breach the 2600 Elo barrier, based on the January 2006 ratings released by the World Chess Federation (Fide).

The 21-year-old Davaoeño, who broke Joey Antonio's 1986-held record for the youngest Filipino to attain the GM title at 21, Oktagon after crushed ninth in Asia, India's world No. 3 Viswanathan Anand tops the list with an Elo rating of 2792.

In chess circles, a rating of 2600 or better marks an informal "super GM" profile.

Eugene Torre, Asia's first GM who rose to the apex of his career in 1983, during his world championship showdown with Hungary's Zoltan Ribli, said he expects Paragua's achievement to inspire more Filipinos to do well on the international scene.

Despite his awe-inspiring victory in the tournament in Tehran, Iranian, in 1992, Torre obtained no more than a 2580 rating, his highest ever.

Currently the world's No.1 player is the semi-retired Garry Kasparov of Russia who owns an Elo rating of 2812. The former world champion is 11 points clear of Bulgarian GM Veselin Topalov (2801).

After Anand at No.3 comes Peter Svidler (2765), of Russia, followed by Levon Aronian (2752) of Armenia.

Rounding off the top 10 are Vladimir Kramnik (2741) of Russia, Peter Leko (2740) of Hungary, Vassily Ivanchuk (2735) of Ukraine, Boris Gelfand of Israel and Ruslan Ponomariov of Ukraine (both 2720).

Among the world's top women, Judit Polgar of Hungary still holds many registering an Elo of 2711, a mere 11 points down the rating of Chinese Badjiew of Xuezhuojun, who leads the boys' under-20 ranks.

Paragua is fresh off a fourth-place finish in the Singapore Masters and Challengers International. Chess Digest/kingbase were not week in the Liem Cup by Chinese GM Shi Hua.

"Mark's accomplishment bodes well for RP chess," said Torre, who is also head of the players' council of the National Chess Federation of the Philippines. "At least a Filipino has reached the elite 2600 group. Hopefully, this will serve as an inspiration for our other players, mostly the youngsters."

Paragua's longtime boosters Victor "Chito" Tagaytay, president and CEO of Tagaytay Marketing Inc., said the young GM has done his "share of giving glory to his country."

He plans to take care of himself and do things "at his own pace," including tricks. Re continuing his studies," Tagaytay said of his ward, a high school graduate.

Paragua is slated to compete in the tough Aeroflot Open Chess Festival from 8th to 24 in Moscow, Russia.

Marlon Bernardino, contributor

PARAGUA: First Filipino to do so.

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PBA matches improve TV ratings

By Jaime Navarro

THE RESURGENT PHILIPPINE BASKETBALL Association is beginning to make inroads in the three bands for television ratings.

In a survey conducted by AGB Nielsen, the league's exclusive television partner, ABC-5, increased its viewership during PBA games in both primetime and regular-time slots.

Viewership percentage on primetime in the ongoing Jun Mig Coffee-PBA Fiesta Conference improved by 29 percent compared to last season, while off-peak timeslot generated a substantial 36-percent increase.

Nine primetime cutbips on weekdays increased by 54 percent while games on Sundays fetched a 68-percent improvement from last conference based on the survey held from Oct. 31-Nov. 25.

"We now this latest development to the millions of fans who have been supporting the PBA for years," said PBA commissioner Noli Eala.

Provincial games also surged 53 percent, or a significant increase from 2.2 percent to 3.5 percent of the entire viewership pie in Saturdays.

The PBA is not only enjoying a resurging rise in gate attendance and ratings but has also in television viewership as well.

Viewership in the ongoing confe-

PBA, A20

James, Cavs bring 'A' game, cool off red-hot Pistons

CLEVELAND—LEBRON James had 30 points, seven rebounds and seven assists as the Cleveland Cavaliers cooled off the red-hot Detroit Pistons, downing them 97-84 in National Basketball Association play on Saturday in Cleveland.

James celebrated his 21st birthday on Friday and followed it up with a strong performance Saturday after blowing five shots as Cleveland ended Detroit's nine-game winning streak.

Cyclonan Hamilton added 28 points for the Cavaliers, who handed the Pistons just their fourth loss of the season at home. All in 24-6.

"We knew we had to bring our 'E game' and that's what we did," James said regarding afterwards.

Drew Gooden added 12 points and pulled up 13 rebounds for the Cavs and said his team knew the importance of getting a win over the Nfth best team to start.

"That's the best team to the league," Gooden said.

Larry Hughes chipped in with 10 points for the Cavaliers, who are 13-3 at home and have beaten the Pistons in their last three meetings, and at least of the last five, as they try to keep them a million eight to the Central Division standings.

The Pistons shot a season-low 38 percent and trailed by 19 points in the first half and by as many as 20 in the third quarter before a late rally made the score a little more respectable.

THERE was no stopping LeBron James and the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Cleveland improved to 19-18 with the win, handing the Cavs six games behind the Pistons in the Central as Detroit continues one of the best starts to a season in NBA history.

Richard Hamilton and Rasheed Wallace both had 23 points to lead the Pistons, who made just four of their 20 3-point attempts.

Ben Wallace landed down 14 rebounds and scored 12 points for the Pistons, while Chauncey Billups scored 14 points.

In Oklahoma City, Dirk Nowitzki scored 24 points as the Dallas Mavericks got by the New Orleans Hornets, 95-90.

Jason Terry and Josh Howard both added 20 points for the Mavericks, who beat the Hornets for the 16th straight time. David Pitre led the Hornets with 18 points and 10 rebounds.

In Chicago, Sharon Marion scored eight of his 20 points in overtime and Eddie House hit a key 3-pointer to lead the Phoenix Suns over the slumping Bulls, 107-98.

Tied at 92 after regulation, Marion scored the Suns' first six points in overtime. His opening layup on the right block made it 98-94 and sent the Bulls into a timeout with 2:17 left.

Boozer then made a 3-pointer to make it a seven-point game. And after a layup by Chicago's Ben Gordon, Devan Boozer sank two free throws with 1:02 left to ice the game.

Marion led Phoenix with 20 points and 11 rebounds and Boozer added 19. Jason Williams added 15 and Steve Nash had 14 assists for the Suns, who have won three straight games. Tinsley, the backcourt duo went 6-for-12 from 3-point range.

In Salt Lake City, Andrei Kirilenko recorded a triple-double with 18 points, 10 rebounds and 10 assists as the Utah Jazz rallied to defeat Philadelphia, 108-102.

The Jazz blew a 13-point lead and needed to rally from a six-point deficit in the fourth quarter, scoring the final seven points of the game and spoiling Allen Iverson's 30-point night for Philadelphia.

In Toronto, Tim Duncan scored 23 points and Manu Ginobili added 20 off the bench as San Antonio's 98-88 win over Toronto.

With Ginobili still resting his sore hand from a foot injury, the defending NBA champs now sport the league's best bench. Ginobili played 24 minutes and had his best performance since returning from an eight-game absence on Monday night.

In Seattle, Johnson Jones made a one-handed 4.3-center (14.4-foot) shot with 6.6 seconds left, and the Memphis Grizzlies held off the Supersonics, 100-96.

In Los Angeles, Eddy Curry scored 20 points, Paul Pierce added 19 and Boozer downed the Los Angeles Clippers, 111-92, to snap a six-game road losing streak.

REUTERS, AP

HOUSTON'S Steve Francis, forward Terrence Trent [illegible]

Golf's homecoming produces a year filled with magic, mystique

JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA—ROBERT ROCCO did always seem to happen whenever golf comes home to St. Andrews.

The mystique of this Old Course, where golf was invented and is celebrated, was bound to produce a British Open for the ages. It was to be the final major for Jack Nicklaus, the greatest major champion of them all, and this year atop the Swilcan Bridge late Friday afternoon became an indelible image.

But Tiger Woods just finished a week at St. Andrews crowded with so many memories that defined the 2000 season.

Right after the grateful departure of Nicklaus came the defiant return of Tiger Woods. He is

WOODS: Stoic magic at Hazeltine.

the finest golfer of his generation, perhaps of all time, and he was determined to show that. Woods won the Open Championship by eight strokes, a runaway that was not nearly as close as the score suggests.

Annika Sorenstam won the first two legs of the Grand Slam and again ruled the world of women's golf with 11 victories, although the teenagers already began to show that the future is now.

Cameron Dunn is a week before graduating high school. Michelle Wie skipped school to announce she was turning pro, signing deals that approached $10 million. Morgan Pressel spent her summer vacation by nearly winning the US Women's Open, and the 17-year-old nearly earned her US LPGA card for next year.

Pixie

The biggest star might have been Ai Miyazato, the 20-year-old pixie from Japan who nearly rules a step without four dozen photographers capturing her every move. She won on the Japanese tour, then came to America and won LPGA qualifying by a record 12 shots.

For all those feats, however, the year belonged to the veteran graces of Nicklaus and Woods at the home of golf.

Woods arrived at St. Andrews looking already nearly established himself among the all-time greats. He is the world, thanks in large part to a dip-in at Augusta National that was sheer magic. Clinging to a one-shot lead over Phil Mickelson, Woods had to pitch to the top of the slope and let it trickle to the hole.

It came off perfectly, the ball making a U-turn at the top of the slope and slowly heading for the hole. It was losing steam as it approached, losing on the lip for one-half second. It slithe the front to catch three breath, then dramatically dropped for a birdie.

Sheer dominance

There were so many dramatics at St. Andrews, only sheer dominance. Average-yards challenged par fairly, but the 29-year-old Woods swore last the lead, or entered of the championship.

"I've been criticized for the last couple of years. Why would I change my game? This is why," Woods said. "First, second and first in the last three majors. That's why."

Mickelson knew the Old Course so much that he doubled as rules it his final major. The 45-year-old Golden Bear is not one for ceremony, but he indulged thousands of fans who gathered around the 18th hole to witness history at the home of golf. They crammed onto rooftops and balconies, pressed their noses against windows and stood on their cars to see the greatest major champion of them all cross the Swilcan Bridge one last time, as

DEMOT

Hopman Cup: US advance

PERTH, AUSTRALIA—LISA RAYmond and Taylor Dent of the United States beat Serbia and Montenegro's Ana Ivanovic and Nenad Zimonjic, 7-5, 6-2, in their deciding mixed doubles match Sunday at the Hopman Cup.

Earlier at the mixed-team tennis tournament at the Burswood Dome, Ivanovic lost separated to Venus Williams, 6-4, and Dent overcame her match for the Americans with a 6-3, 6-4 win over Djokovic.

The United States is the most successful country at the tournament, having won the title three times.

The big-serving Dent and dreadlocked Djokovic featured rattled 4-2 in the opening set before coming back to win the tiebreaker, 7-5.

"They got off to a fast start, but we just had to hang in there," said Raymond.

The Americans pulled away in the second set, breaking Ivanovic's service in the final game. Dent set up triple-match point with a drill instructor drop volley and the Americans won the match two points later when Djokovic put an attempted passing into the net.

Ivanovic had site and Djokovic should have converted their lead into a first-set win.

"This was our first time playing mixed doubles," Ivanovic said. "The last player's respected. We showed the injury in Australia. I live in Germany so Saturday."

Todd Reid will replace Andy and since Reid is ranked 1 thirteen in singles, Australia remains eligible for the champion title.

Doubles also on Hingis' schedul

GOLD COAST, AUSTRALIA—JUSTINE Henin-Hardenne of France has found a willing doubles partner as the two-million women's hardcourt tennis championships—comeback player Martina Hingis.

Gridiron, 17, will partner Hingis to doubles and video on Australia's Nicole Pratt in singles on Monday. Hingis will also play singles Monday, facing 82nd-ranked Maria Sharapova in Kuala Lumpur in her return to competitive tennis in Royal Pines.

Hingis, who has been off the circuit for three years due to worsening foot injuries, announced today on Friday and asked whether she wanted to play doubles with her.

"She said 'do you want to play?' and I said 'of course'," Gridiron said. "Who doesn't want to play with Martina?"

"I just feel very lucky. We're all very happy to have her back."

The 25-year-old Hingis, winner of five Grand Slam singles titles, is one of the most successful doubles players as well, claiming nine Grand Slam titles, including four Australian Opens.

She is one of only four women to win all four doubles majors in one year—in 1998.

In her second singles play Sunday, players from the Czech Republic won three matches, including Lucie Safarova's upset victory over ninth-seeded Ai Sugiyama of Japan.

Sugiyama, Sanjuyama, 6-1, 6-2, second-seeded Elena Dementieva defeated Meghann Shaughnessy of the United States, 6-4, 6-4, and Iona Beatrice Ruzanu defeated Italian wild card Sophie Ferguson, 7-5, 6-2.

Meanwhile, in Auckland, New Zealand, Slovakia's Daniela Hantuchova headlines the women's contingent in singles action for the Auckland Women's Tennis Classic, which starts and serves as a tune-up for Australian Open.

Re only the second time to the top women's 10 ever history, the field includes three top 20 players, headed by Hantuchova (fourteen in number nine, Kuznetsova (11 and Petrova's compatriot Elena Likhovtseva at number 17.

Hantuchova, a former world number five, regained her form last year after struggling for 18 months with weight problems and personal difficulties, and has been one of attention since arriving here.

She said the intense media glare a no distract her from her ultimate go Hantuchova with Petrova.

"It's just all part of it. I don't allow it to f me, to ruin it into pressure," said Hantuchova, who will face unheralded Uk on Yuka Sugiyamoto in the first round.

AP

Quietly saving the best

BARE EYE

Barak Trinidad

YOUNG ARTIST RONALD ROSLANDER, running again from Dunsmuir, Gonzaga, thrusts over the holiday table, wondering.

He sees didn't stay or hurt from all the cutsel, multi-colored explosions. He sees, smiles last year, is the constant asterisk.

The grandchildren serve down, okay. But there seemed to be a shortage of attention.

It's strange. The biggest year for the Pinoy athlete was one off with what would go down as the shortest, lightest time. Not overley here to years.

The shirt lit up, in small. But he must as one of the metropolis, glamour, industrial Kennedy and Gonzaga before, they would point to positive statistical numbers.

* * *

Boxer gold-medal Eumesio Boie reminded that the earliest New Year's Eve euphoria has lasted only 20 minutes.

Migs Bolipata—martial arts, athlete, Aspro try (By Tariff gun) 12 midnights. It was over," he said yesterday.

Most of the house streets appeared in-

tact, unlike before when they would get shattered by a pitched storm this morning after.

In why a short, relatively light celebration where this was the right time to envision and pour it all out?

This was no way to celebrate the second victory of Team Philippines in the last Southeast Asian Games, where gold medalists were trained by an overwhelmed government and its First Gentleman to a splurging holiday at the Hong Kong Disneyland.

* * *

Why? Who would dare censure an orderly quiet gasm?

Dad Boie is California, Manny Pacquiao turned 27 on Dec. 17 in the hills. Carl Uyan in Hollywood, away from his family.

For the holidays, the sweetest moments are when only phone calls, looking inside from the cold hills in Gonzaga, as he spoke to you to camp.

Don't dare ask Pacquiao why he's such-

by the terrible terrible.

Everybody knows he's preparing for the biggest fight of his life.

Pacquiao, 49 national sports treasure, fighting a full week, there's no moment, we against Mexican boxing legend Jo Morales, who had previously gone bloodied and beaten him.

* * *

In Manila, Butch Ramirez, head the Philippine Sports Commission, hated they are setting up 5 indivi sports institute which should harbor t scientific future gold medalists, run a

ven the Jazz hang all over a dunk.

Kobe's absence opens door for rookie

EL SEGUNDO, CALIFORNIA—THOUGH the first three months of the season, Lakers guard Von Wafer has possessed as much attention for his card playing as anything he has done on an NBA court.

There was nothing subtle about coach Phil Jackson's decision to give Wafer a couple of "Poker for Dummies" when he handed out books to the Lakers players on their away-game road trip last month.

But Wafer might have emerged with a winning hand from Friday's news that the NBA suspended Kobe Bryant two games for a flagrant foul on Memphis guard Eddie Miller in the fourth quarter Wednesday night.

There is a strong possibility that Wafer, a second-round draft pick who has played all of six games and 17 minutes as a rookie, will start in Bryant's place against the Utah Jazz at Staples Center.

"Von has a lot of game," Jackson said. "He's an aggressive player. Sometimes you've got to harness that a little bit."

The Lakers are down to just 11 available players, three of those rookies, with Bryant suspended.

Wafer returned to the active roster only last week when guard Luron Profit was lost for the season with a ruptured Achilles tendon.

"I just try not to put too much pressure on myself," Wafer said.

Wafer has been described by Jackson as an "unstoppable" scorer in practice. The 20-year-old passed submitted (Columbia) his weight benefit team not having to find his brother crossing off the bench.

"He has a world of talent," Delma added. "He's a good offensive player."

Jackson suspension leaves the 20-year-old guard be playing significantly on Christmas against Memphis's Freeman Wade.

The Lakers suffered a 6-point when Delma added his night under driving the lane at the end of practice. Odom and Jackson both believe the 6-foot-10 forward's injury was no cause for concern.

Bryant stayed home with the flu and is not allowed to attempt either game for which he has been suspended.

Jackson was asked when would have happened in his playing days if Bryant had volunteered an elbow to the chin like he did to Miller.

"That would have instigated a fight," Jackson said. "If you did something like that, it definitely meant that you weren't playing the process as a basketball player, you were out there to victim tough stuff."

Odom said Friday he wanted all five starters to finish in double figures playing without Bryant. Jackson described his players as "licking their chops" thinking about the 30 shots that are now available for the taking.

"I feel like this offense provides a lot of opportunities," rookie Chris Mihm added, "and we've got a lot of guys that are, [were] used, very underrated effectively in the community." *New York Times News Service*

Former Nuggets coach keeps new score

DENVER—BY THE TIME DAVID WORT AT 7 hospital workers preached our pre-formed with no guarantee against cancer, a basketball coach discovered a new way to keep score.

Jeff Bzdelik walked into Children's Hospital in hopes to ease his daughter.

He walked out a better coach, a better father, person.

"It's a life-changing experience for any parent who has spent a night in that hospital and watched the sun come up," said Bzdelik, whose child was treated in 2005 for a brain cancer that proved to be benign.

"There are lots of children who will always be in my mind. My family was here, came in with one of them. A lot of kids died. Those kids are some of the toughest people I've ever seen. I would watch a kid half-dozen tests every day, then get right back up and try again."

Dream job

On New Year's Eve of 2004, Bzdelik was unemployed, tired from a dream job to the NBA, a son of Colorado Nuggets' brands.

On Jan. 1, 2006, there's a healthy daughter for Bzdelik to hug and the first little college basketball team in Colorado to call his own.

Any way you score it, Bzdelik has won.

Courtney Bzdelik, a teenage girl who underwent brain surgery last year and forced to roll about it, caught her father here to embrace the endless possibilities of this next big dream, rather than silently over what could have been.

"It makes you stop and think every day," said Bzdelik, grinning at the memory of waking in time for the hospital shower at 4:30 a.m., when the mother of a sick child attended the worst extended line of cause ever entry.

Not an option

"Winning a basketball game? I mean, for the longest telling me, I can't afford to lose a bad day' is professional athlete talk," say. Pete, we had an all night. Not the folks at Children's Hospital, that's not an option.

"I see parents the exact same time into my daughter's room at 3 o'clock in the morning, full of passion. Our surgeon worked harder just to inspire hours, than I ever did in my coaching career and I took a life on itself."

Bzdelik call him Coach Bzdz. It's more than a nickname. It's the energy Bzdelik produces.

His intensity is no high voltage, being done to Bzdelik is only to standing under a power line. You can hear the patience that begins through his veins.

Little difference

Red light. Green. It made little difference. Coach Bzzz was not built to stop the scuffling.

Down 20 points to the fourth quarter, he would demand a timeout and furiously scribble a play for the Nuggets. He argued with refs like a 240-lb guy hour. Down 3 were people out.

"Basketball has always been just a part of my life. But it has become a smaller part of my life, to that good? I don't think. It's good. I know it's good. It makes you a better coach," said Bzdelik.

"The rewarding things that aren't easy. But now there's a human side of me, maybe player can see. Instead of the tense guidelight-tasked stress, we can have a little levity. I felt my players therefore day in and 20 years of coaching, I've never had so much fun."

Counting how Bzdelik, it was nothing but the truth.

After being dumped by the Nuggets 10 games into last season, coach Bzzz put down seats deeper in Colorado soil.

Down the road from his home, Bzdelik took a job far from the lights of the NBA, filling a distinctly unglamorous position encircled in the second-lowest low point.

For decades, Air Force academy basketball has allowed two career paths for a coach. There's a hoops pedestrian program, allowing the suits on the bench to disappear slowly into uncertainty. Or a chosen Lieutenant can make a safe professional bid for a quick, one-way ticket out of town.

Best start

In the shadow at this Falcons have fashioned the best start in school history, winning 12 of 13 games, and Bzdelik doesn't appear to be going anywhere.

While prospective might have softened the coach's heart, Bzdelik's hard-as-concrete stomach made room.

The Falcons won again Saturday. They host Indiana this Dec. The score?

"I try to convince Bzdelik's wife by assurance on a scoreboard, and you're making the point. *New York Times News Service*

Badminton takes roller-coaster ride in 2005

By Mae Anthony Reyes

THE BEST AND WORST FOR FILIPINO badminton in 2005.

After 16 unprecedented stops in practically the sport took to the depths last this year following a miserable record, the 22nd Southeast Asian Games where this country only won a total of just one month.

The monumental debacle seemed to put a dampener on the sport's future, resulting in a far more vacant courts in badminton centers, where even as long ago people would have to queue up just to make reservations.

The result, although more or less expected considering the world-class status of the SEAG field, also hastened the departure of national head coach Martin Arnaiz.

But in addition to Arnaiz's, he not only took on a job nobody wanted but, when he came on board, it was practically impossible to form a competitive team with just a few months left before the Games.

Arnaiz, who from the start said he would stay only for the duration of the SEA Games, said it's up to the Philippine Badminton Association to choose a new coach.

He said the SEA Games "just confirmed that we are slowly drifting backwards" "we're only behind the world, [we] are [now] even further behind [in] Asian badminton."

"You see, 20 or so participating nations in Armenia, Malaysia and Thailand [is] taking badminton to the SEAG, but what's shocking is that even Vietnam played [were there too]," said Arnaiz.

"Badminton really catapulted to being a mass-oriented sport years at the grassroots to compete on the level," added Arnaiz. "It hasn't been elevated to a top division 6 to 12 years down the road it we are really serious in our pursuit for excellence."

The philosophy were shared by former national training director Eyob Chan, who called on drastic changes not only in the composition of the team but also in the makeup of the PBA since have previously headed by former First Lady Elsa Ramos and former NCRPO chief Edgardo Aglipay.

KENNEDY: Jacuzzi fails to save the country's SEAG bid.

One candidate should be definite guidelines so far is that the experience exclusively brought about by "top supervision of the parents of the players and the over the godparents of the sport itself."

But Chan is confident the SEAG debacle won't have a permanent damage to the health of badminton, stating that the sport's popularity is based on the fact that the masses can readily play the sport and not on sporadic appeal like in other case of boxing and basketball.

"Badminton itself continue to flourish the grassroots as it is inherent in us a form of physical fitness," he said.

And there lies the hope that from the grassroots will spring even larger national stars.

Yao, Shaq lead all-star balloting

NEW YORK—TWO MEMO OF THE HOUSTON Rockets and Kobe Bryant of the Los Angeles Lakers lead the Western Conference, while Shaquille O'Neal of the Miami Heat and Lebron James of the Cleveland Cavaliers lead the Eastern Conference in voters as tabulated in the second returns of the 2006 NBA all-star balloting process.

Through the 2006 NBA All-Star balloting program, NBA fans from around the globe are responsible for voting in the starters for the 55th NBA All-Star Games, which will be played in Houston on Feb. 19. The game will be broadcast live on TNT. Rogers Sportsnet, ESPN Radio and radio in several languages on NBA.com.

The leads all players with 1,316,666 votes. Teammate Yao Ming only leads all Western Conference forwards with 1,369,043 votes, followed by Minnesota Timberwolves' Kevin Garnett (795,879). Bryant (1,211,307) and Dirk Nowitzki (1,121,823), the 2006 All-Star Most Valuable Player, lead all Western Conference guards.

O'Neal leads all Eastern Conference players with 1,110,839 votes, followed by James (1,100,928). The Indiana Pacers' Jermaine O'Neal (409,926) is second in Eastern voting. Eastern Conference forwards. The MVP of the 2005 NBA All-Star Game, Allen Iverson of the Philadelphia 76ers, leads all Eastern Conference guards (1,144,250), followed by the Heat's Dwyane Wade (827,921).

This year's All-Star Balloting process includes T-Mobile, AOL, NBA.2K6, Slam and select Conference & Electronics Boutique.

Lawrence, Domogan bag Ilusorio Cup trophies

BAGUIO CITY—BILL LAWRENCE AND Bagito Bay, Masbate Domogan were home with perfect Dive Year presents on Friday as they bagged the two coveted trophies of the ninth Pinoy Eastern Open at the Baguio Country Club (BCC).

The ever-smiling Lawrence, the Asian's one-time marathon title could not celebrate as his second home and also a member of the sports and grounds committee of the BCC, owned an impressive 68 to capture the overall low gross crown.

Bay Domogan good his foundation of BCC's oldest but challenging par-64 course to grab the Class A title with an even 64.

The usual, the Pinoy Cup was a happy affair as BCC general manager Alexander Lorca.

Wilson Ignatio, Hanshop Shampoo Group, Prudential Guarantee, Eco-Group, Steelmetro International, Sun Digital Corp., RAMS, BPI, Rubin-Gib, Embassies, Remington Carpets and WB Chemical and associates were the sponsors.

Other who made the grade in the 20-man cut were Jose Jr. Ang (Class B), Ramon Ancheta (Class C), and Alex Flores (Class E), Stanley Fille (Ladies A), Lito Bendez (Ladies B), and Bonna Hernandez (Ladies C).

Bong Shershpur (Class A), Frank Rodolfo (Class B), and Dick Sinik (Class C) were in the senior division. Boni Pilar and Luigi Rimando placed 1-2 in the Juniors division division while Willie Fernandez won the guest winner.

# of Pinoy

ly to the Asian Games but in the Olympics as well.

But the growing game continues as who Bonn's relative quiet seen for the usually rainy Pinoy, not only during the holidays, but also in the case of Pinoy-golfers who appears to be training in exhibition.

Are we finally learning that loudness, blinded self-importance, the inserted "push-ah," bragging, and unwanting desire of superiority are all accept-goods to victory?

The greatest thing our weakening athletes had kept aside them, as they consistently leave the last SEA Games, was a quiet heroic heart, strong and determined.

Another question: Is the Pinoy seeing his instinct his loudest to-raise for the Olympic flight, when there certainly would be cheering in the streets at the event of victory?

It's not exactly embroyed to assume that a big Peruvian win in Los Vegas in Jan. 21 could fall out the rain of the pros against the US dollar.

The fight has soured, loosed bright in to that grand.

Of course, there's humorous gladness now that Peruvian has refused to again plead his previous of more when the thinnest he would just was now Manolo, whose Peruvian thought would be there for the picking.

Our in the corner set-up (1000) store, a cup-invasion hosting debased assured that Peruvian should be able to host and stop illusion riders to seem or eight rounds.

Manolo is good, classy, he said, but there will soon be using thinner fight phrases, like last March.

Mind you, this young man is not about to let gallows all his hands energies preparing for the upcoming renewed-home.

Coincidence: after Peruvian have follow the same line of training.

That's a lot of nonsense.

NY Giants cop NFC east division title

OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA—TIKI BARBER ran for 260 yards and a touchdown to spark the New York Giants past Oakland 39-13 here Saturday, clinching a division title and home-field edge in a playoff game next weekend.

The Giants (10-5) won their first NFC East division crown in five seasons as a Sunday-at Football League owners. But take the deaths of co-owners Wellington Mara and Lawrence Tisch.

"This is very sweet for a lot of reasons," Barber said. "To be able to hand this division title to the Mara family and Tisch family is very special."

The victory ends the division title hopes of the Washington Redskins, who can still improve to playoff berth by defeating Philadelphia on Sunday. A loss and Dallas would replace them in the playoffs by virtue of a better conference record.

In Saturday's only other American football game, Tatum Bell ran for three touchdowns and the Denver Broncos beat Kansas City 45-7, a victory that kept the Broncos tough. Steelers from clinching a playoff berth.

The Broncos finished the National Football League season 13-3 with the second seed in the American Conference playoffs behind Indianapolis while the Chargers, previously eliminated from the playoffs, close at 9-7.

Tiki Barber (above) plays here for the New York Giants.

JOSHUA WEBB

Bench warmer comes to the fore

By Jasmine W. Payo

RECOMMENDATION A JOKE? SUPPORTERS BLESSED WITH 'FINE' football genius."

But save for his family and friends' support, Joshua David Ignacio Webb admits he isn't done proving much unless he hits gold.

"I was always an average" said Webb, the sophomore center of the La Salle Zobel Junior Archers. "During my freshman year, I couldn't do much. But I really wanted to help the team, so I promised myself that I would train to step up. I wanted to improve myself, to show that I do belong in this team."

Indeed, there have been a lot of changes for the 15-year-old cager.

Webb, grandson of former BP team mentor, people power and ex-senator Freddie Webb, got his big break when he filled in for the team's injured starting center late last year.

And 2005 turned out to be Webb's breakthrough season. He powered the Junior Archers to their first UAAP junior basketball championship three months ago, averaging a career-best 13.9 points and 10.5 rebounds.

"My numbers just kept getting up," said coach-turn-lolligunt of his prize-winning team. "It was a big surprise. Although I saw it coming because that guy's a workaholic."

Still, Webb didn't expect all the attention following the Junior Archers' historic win.

"In school, people actually come up to me to sign their jerseys," he said. "Before, I was just nothing. They just know me as the guy who plays basketball."

Webb, along with top junior center passed Simon Atkins, led La Salle to sweeping the University of the Philippines Junior Maroons during the Finals—73-49 in Game 1 and 88-63 in Game 2—to give school's first title since joining the league in 1986.

"Yes, of all the name in child, we're the special team that brought home the crown," said Atkins. "It was a great honor. It was really cool."

"You know the saying that if you work hard for something, you'll get it?" asked Webb. "I still, and that it's so true."

Webb was also glad that he made his family proud, especially his grandfather Freddie and dad Fritz.

"My title [grand dad] always said that I should always be humble," he said, recalling how the older Webb inspired him to work on his game.

"I started in Grade 5, but I was just shooting," said the young Webb. "I joined the varsity for kids. I had no knowledge about basketball. But when my title hand about it, he started giving me a trick."

And it seems that his father has always encouraged him to star on the basketball.

"I named him Spider Webb because I thought it would be a cool jock name," laughed Fritz.

But clearly, Webb has chosen the perennial to live up to the Spider moniker.

"He's very young," stated Atkinson. "There's no reason why he can't improve. He's a true guy, who doesn't give up. You should wait until he's in [semi] year. By then, he must be dunking left and right."

AFTER carrying his school to the championship, Joshua Webb no longer wides the La Salle tunnels.

POC chief guest of honor in PSA Awards Night

THE BIGGEST BASKING OFFICIAL credited for the successful staging of the 23rd Southeast Asian Games will be the guest of honor and speaker when the PSA (Philippine Sportswriters Association) from the country's biggest sports achievers in 2005 on Jan. 16 at the Manila Pavilion.

For the second straight year, Philippine Olympic Committee president Jose "Peping" Cojuangco will serve as main speaker during the gala that honoring all those who did their share to making the sporting year a memorable one.

"The sportsmen here are honored to have Mr. Cojuangco as guest of honor," said PSA president Jimmy Cantor of Malaya. "I'm sure he would like to spend the evening with the athletes who did so proud in the SEA Games and other international competitions."

Palace head

Cojuangco also headed the Philippine Southeast Asian Games Organizing Committee (Phisgoc), the group that handled the staging of the last SEA Games.

And despite limited funding, the Phisgoc managed to hold the Games successfully. The biennial meet saw the emergence of Team Philippines as the new sports power in the region.

Team Philippines captured the overall title for the first time since joining the meet in 1977 by winning 113 gold medals, a historic achievement. But easily outstanding in the PSA Athletes of the Year honors.

According to Cantor, Cojuangco will also salute diver Gloria Diaz Perez and a few other athletes in accepting the well-crafted trophy during the award ceremony, sponsored by Red Bull and supported by San Miguel Corp., Philippine Sports Commission and Manila Mayor Lito Atienda.

Twenty-two athletes, most of them multiple SEA Games gold medal winners, will be recipients of major awards from the country's oldest media group made up of sportswriters from the national newspapers.

Other achievers

Sharing the spotlight with them will be the new set of Filipino SEA Games gold medalists and other athletes who shone in their respective sports, among them pro boxer Manny Pacquiao and golfer Jennifer Rosales.

Ben Miguel Cojuangco, who's donated P4.06 million in the PSA foundation as part of the athletes' training expenses for the SEA Games, heads the list of centers and individuals who will be given citations during the two-hour show to be telecast on a delayed basis by ABS-CBN Channel 4.

To the Philippine Olympic Committee president goes the honor of being named the most outstanding executive.

Filipinos scored the all-gold medals ended in the track, formal host nets in the SEA Games.

The list of awardees:

ATHLETE OF THE YEAR—Juan Miguel Elorde

MALE AWARDEES—Jose Pagsanjan (athletics), Rizalito Pedalino (jet-boating), Jeremy Gretino (amateur basketball), Jose Mark Lore (basketball), Jennifer Rosales (women's golf), Jose Pagsanjan (amateur golf), Mark Echevarria (amateur boxing), Marivelle Torres (athletics), Gregory Pacquiao (amateur boxing), Manuel Antonio (swimming), Juan Perez (diving), Ramon Fernandez (amateur boxing), Jose Ramos (jet-boating), Gabriel Rubio (traditional boat racing), Rogelio Adique (lifting), Manuel Maja (lifting), Jeremy Bautista (lifting), Ricky Gutierrez (lifting), Jose Lazaro (lifting), Jennifer Rosales (golf), Jose Lazaro (lifting), Jennifer Rosales (golf), Jose Lazaro (lifting), Jennifer Rosales (golf

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Zero duty on special vehicle parts up for Palace approval

Promoting use of alternative transport fuels

By Abigail L. Ho

THE CABINET-LEVEL NATIONAL Economic and Development Authority Board has endorsed to President Macapagal-Arroyo for approval an executive order reducing to zero the tariffs slapped on imported materials and components used for the assembly of vehicles powered by alternative fuels.

The Department of Energy and the Board of Investments, an agency of the trade department, proposed the EO to encourage investors to go into the assembly of vehicles that would use biodiesel, bio-ethanol, compressed natural gas (CNG) and electricity.

The proposed EO brings down to zero both the most favored nation (MFN) and common effective preferential tariff (CEPT) rates on imported components and accessories of hybrid, electric, flex-fuel and CNG vehicles by qualified Motor Vehicle Development Program participants.

At present, the tariffs on imported motor vehicle parts and components are 3 percent under the MFN and one percent under the CEPT.

The CEPT rate applies to imports coming from Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries, while the MFN rate applies to those coming from non-Asean countries.

(story to B7 to 8)

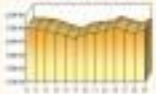
WHAT'S INSIDE
Taipannic bonuses /B3
$40M worth of loans for microfinancing OKd /B4

Currencies

DEC 09 01
PESO-DOLLAR RATE
₱53.09 = $1
as of 5 p.m. Dec. 31, 2004
117.48 = $1
as of 5 p.m. Dec. 31, 2004
GOLD: $[illegible]/OUNCE
as in early Hong Kong Dec. 31, 2004

Stock Market

PSE COMPOSITE INDEX



(Detailed market report on Page B2)

Stocks advance 1.4%

STOCKS ENDED 2005 ON AN UPBEAT NOTE, as investors took advantage of the year-end's cheap prices to load for bargains, traders said.

The benchmark 30-company Philippine Stock Exchange index rose 28.72 points, Thursday, or 1.4 percent, to 2,098.00. The wider stock (2-1 percent) on the past two trading days, including Wednesday's one-percent loss.

The main index rose up 10 percent from its 2004 closing level of 1,909.80. Three more via trading last Friday, markets holiday. Trading resumes today.

Blue-chips dominated trading, led by Bank of the Philippine Islands, which rose 1.5 percent to P54.95, Philippine Long Distance Telephone Co., up 1.1 percent at P1,830, and Globe Telecom, up 2.1 percent to P[illegible].

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URC earmarking $60M in '06 for expansion of beverage plants

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

UNIVERSAL ROBINA CORP. (URC), THE branded food firm of tycoon John Gokongwei Jr., plans to invest about P60 million to expand its beverage plants in the Philippines, industry sources told the Inquirer.

The sources said URC might also put up a beverage plant in Vietnam.

Under the plans, URC will expand its beverage plant in Laguna and build a new factory in Batangas.

URC is eyeing about P300 million through the offering of shares to international and local investors this year or a maximum of P5.6 billion, documents from the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) showed.

To support the expansion program, URC is setting aside about P1.3 billion in 2006 for capital expenditures. This will be partially funded through the proposed share offering.

Of the proposed budget, some P1.04 billion will be spent for the expansion of its branded consumer food operations, largely the beverage line, and its processes in international markets such as China and Vietnam.

URC is also allocating P1.07 billion out of its capex for the expansion of its sugar mill and refinery through Southern Negros Development Corp. The remaining P127.1 million will be used for additional manufacturing, machinery and equipment for URC's agro-industrial division.

We are a blessed nation

NO FREE LUNCH

CielAlo P. Buhido

MAYBE MOST OF US FILIPINOS SHOULDN'T look back to the past year with particular fondness, a recent survey showed that more than four of five Filipinos are hopeful about the coming new year.

Eighty-five percent of adult Filipinos look to 2006 with hope rather than fear, according to the Fourth Quarter Social Weather Stations (SWS) Survey conducted from Nov. 27 to Dec. 4, 2005.

Remarkably, the 2005 responsiveness even tops hopeful (83 percent) than the higher-income respondents (73 percent).

Equally remarkable is the way the survey respondents indicated "We improve their attitude in general so to be a better person" and "to study harder/look for work/continue into business" as the top New Year's resolutions. All this tells me that our country is still worth rolling it out with.

I know I have been sounding rather negative about our current economic, social and political situation in the past weeks, but I would rather end 2005 and start 2006 on a positive note, sounding one blessings.

The economy may have been buffeted by multiple pressures ranging from skyrocketing oil prices and fiscal difficulties to political strife and natural calamities, but as many of us like to say, the Filipinos' resilience through adversity has always swung us through.

Crisis to crisis

Many of us wonder why misfortunes never seem to leave us, and why we can't ever seem to achieve the same economic takeoff experienced by our more dynamic Asian neighbors. Answers economists have described our unique situation as one of muddling through from crisis to crisis, and never quite getting anywhere.

Ironically, the SWS survey results indicate that those who suffer most tend to have the most positive attitude. It is this persevering, never-give-up attitude that equips our people to withstand the storm of economic and political crises that have persistently challenged us to overcome our troubles.

Ultimately, it is this same resilient attitude that will help us prevail and turn our country around in God's proper time.

In the Bible, Job suffered misfortunes after misfortune, yet remained steadfast and held on to his faith in God. In the end, he was rewarded by God with prosperity far beyond what he began.

It is Job's seemingly incessant travails that our country has been going through, but many among the faithful believe that God has a special plan for this country. No less than Pope John Paul II had prophesied that the Philippines will be the light in Asia and the world, and it will be our young people who will bear that light.

Counting blessings

It doesn't take much for one to see that ours is a nation richly blessed. We have been endowed with such an abundance of natural resources of various kinds on our mountains, in our land, and in our waters.

It is well established that biodiversity in the Philippines is among the richest in the world. We have also been described as having the richest mineral resource deposits per capita and per unit area in the globe.

But our richest resource by far is our resilient people, millions of whom are now deployed all around the globe. Many are convinced that this is in fulfillment of a strategic role Filipinos are destined to play in the world, whether in the economic, political, cultural or spiritual realms.

Writer Jessica Zafra describes it, half tongue-in-cheek but also half seriously, as our impending domination of the world.

If one is to believe in this as part of our destiny as a nation (as in a "nation without borders", as another writer has put it), then our forgiveness of others and of ourselves is of the utmost. It humbles that has driven our kababayans all over the world through all these years.

Favorable global trends

Meanwhile, global economic trends are working in our ultimate favor. Aging populations in the rich industrialized countries are providing a wide array of rich opportunities for Filipinos, whether at home or abroad.

From caregivers, physicians and nurses to retirement estate developers and medical tourist firms, the opportunities are staggering. And Filipinos are best positioned to cash in on these niches, given the acknowledged loving and caring qualities of the Filipino people.

One new Blue International Previous Lara Quigaman put it beautifully in her endearing description of the Filipina domestic as one who makes a living out of caring and loving other people.

The rush toward business process outsourcing (BPO) due to rising labor costs in rich economies is another key global trend working to Filipinos' benefit.

Call centers, medical transcription, architectural and engineering designs, accounting, financial investment management, and many other backroom processes are among the services now providing higher-than-average compensation to many thousands of young Filipino workers and entrepreneurs.

There is, by many indications, a bright future awaiting the Philippines. I believe, along with countless other Filipinos, that God has much in store for our beloved country. He is just waiting for us, like Job, to turn back humbly to Him and yield to His Divine Plan.

Unfortunately, the QSS survey showed only 1 percent of respondents indicating their New Year's resolution is to be "improving their relationship with God."

If we are to fulfill our nation's destiny, this is one statistic we'll all have to improve on first. (Comments are welcome at cbuhido@inquirer.com.ph.)

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GLOBEQUEST VPN EXPRESS PROVIDES SECURE, COST-EFFECTIVE REMOTE NETWORK SERVICE

Traditionally, companies requiring remote access for their data transport and traffic have to rely on prohibitive costs of dedicated data lines or the cheaper but much slower dial-up connections.

However, organizations now have an affordable alternative to traditional remote access solutions by shifting to the Internet to securely extend the reach of their network resources.

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It is best for retailers, franchisers, airlines, logistics and trades, manufacturers, government and academe, and other multi-site businesses and could be used for help desk support, FOS application, remote monitoring, inventory management, video conferencing, e-learning, application hosting, among others.

GlobeQUEST VPN Express initiates IPSec tunneling and encryption to enable a site/office of the customer network to be virtually connected to its headquarters and other branches.

IPSec is a protocol which sits on top of the Internet Protocol (IP) layer and ensures enhanced Internet security and privacy of data, thereby preventing unauthorized persons from accessing the information being received and sent.

In addition, the IPSec-based GlobeQUEST VPN Express integrates and supports multiple technologies and access methods that allow companies to build on their existing network and continue to run business applications whether voice, data or video over a wide area.

Thus, clients can realize significant savings on operational expenses through innovative design and approach to private networking.

The service is, likewise, easily scalable, customizable and flexible to meet the clients' growing needs and is fully integrated with GlobeQUEST's private data network services such as MPLS (Multiprotocol Label Switching) which can be used to aggregate traffic to the head office.

GlobeQUEST VPN Express offers variants that are tailor-fit to customize networking requirements and provides the clients with an "always-on" connectivity to ensure real-time information availability from its geographically dispersed branches or location.

Real-time connectivity enables customer to have updated information from dispersed location. This translates into faster decision making, better monitoring and improve market response.

It is available anywhere anyone can get an Internet connection whether in the Philippines or abroad and can be accessed through foreign partner service providers or aggregators.

It also provides end-to-end management for proactive monitoring of customer network as well as value-added features such as Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) and Managed Security.

VPN Express aims to fulfill the demand for secure connectivity of most enterprises today in a cost-effective, fast and simple approach. Businesses can link up customers, suppliers and partners to drive more revenues, set faster and extend better customer experience.

Expect more from GlobeQUEST, as it positions itself as your ICT partner of choice in delivering relevant and practical solutions.

GlobeQUEST, the corporate business group of Innove Communications, is a leader in first-tier networking solutions in the Philippines. It has an assembly of products and services such as GlobeQUEST Private Networks, GlobeQUEST Broadband Internet, GlobeQUEST Corporate Voice, GlobeQUEST Broadband Access, GlobeQUEST DataCentres, and GlobeQUEST Enterprise Mobility Solutions - each designed to answer any challenge a business may conceive. For more information, please log on to www.globequest.com.ph.

Taipannic bonuses

SHS MODEL CORE STILL HANDS OUT THE fattest pay envelopes among the listed companies, despite it being no longer the stock's most profitable enterprise.

For the year just past, the country's biggest food and beverage conglomerate was estimated to have paid chair/CEO Eduardo Cojuangco Jr., president Ramon Ang and seven other key officers P223.5 million in salaries, bonuses and allowances, not counting stock options.

That is about P257 million each officer on average, in exchange for the Cojuangco management turning in P6.09 billion in profits in 2004.

Contrast those figures with those of the Philippine Long Distance Telephone Corp., which is no slouch when it comes to eye-popping P27.97 billion in net income.

In return, PLDT president/CEO Napoleon Nazareno and 20 top officers were estimated to have received P203.7 million, or about P7.45 million on average, in their 2005 pay packets.

Apples to apples, even the executives of the profit-shy Globe Telecom were better compensated than PLDT's, the richest in bodies.

Globe president Gerardo Ablaza Jr. and nine other top officers were estimated to have received P106.33 million in 2005 compensation, or about P10.63 million each on average.

Globe's 2004 net income was really P1.1.46 billion, nearly half more than San Miguel's, among the rupees, the Cojuangco family lived up to their parsimonious reputation, despite their listed holding company being a cash cow supplier.

For 2005, chair/CEO James Go, chair emeritus John Gokongwei Jr. and his son Lance were estimated to have paid themselves and two other top JG Summit executives P42.5 million in all, or about P8.5 million each on average.

In 2004, the Gokongwei-controlled unit P5.9 billion in net profits out of their food, beverage, airline, petrochemical, textile, hotel, real estate and retail spread.

Incidentally, the Sys and Gokongwei the Gokongwei when it comes to paying themselves. In the Sy Holding company, SM Investments Corp.

Despite SMIC posting P5.31 billion in net income for the fiscal year 2005, the combined pay checks of president Hanley Sy and his brothers Hans and Herbert and two others for their same year totaled a shabby P14.999 million, or about P3.8 million each on average.

Banking spreads

BPI/MBI the banks, the quietly profitable Ayalas and, surprisingly least the big boys in executive compensation.

Chair Gilbert Dee, president/CEO Nieto Jao and three others were estimated to have received more than P63.3 million, or about P12.8 million each on average, in total 2005 compensation.

On the other hand, the country's biggest bank, Metrobank, was estimated to have compensated its majority owner/chair/CEO George Ty, president Antonio Abacan and two others about P68.66 million, or P13.32 million each on average, in the same year.

The Ayala-controlled Bank of the Philippine Islands, meanwhile, rewarded new president Aurelio Montinola III and four other top guns about P72.31 million, or about P14.4 million each on average.

Hamburger gravy

PERE hamburger flipping may be the last of jokes within the financial press, working for the top of the food chain feels like working for a trading bank or a big telecom company, estimates show.

Jollibee president V. Ed Tong Tan Cokiong and four top officers of the country's biggest restaurant chain were estimated to have received P55.47 million, or P11.09 million each on average, in 2005 compensation.

That pay scale easily eclipses the average package in PLDT or Bayan de Oro Coverage top executive package. PC.96 million or even the Gokongwei, despite Jollibee reporting P1.34 billion in 2004 profits.

The Jollibee package even eaten out the non-multinational International Container Terminal Services Inc. of Enrique Razon Jr. Razon and four ICTSI officers were estimated to have received P51.3 million, or P10.26 million each on average, in 2005 compensation, on the back of P1.46 billion 2004 profits.

Heard through the grapevine

RED Rosendo Espinosa may be the San Juan representative, but it looks like the former Batasan executive secretary is determined to make Ayala Heights in Quezon City his second residence.

The godly congressman has now doubled his residential footprint after acquiring the neighboring lot in the exclusive subdivision.

E-mail: inchtales_philst@hotmail.net or cocktales_phl@yahoo.com.

Zero duty . . .

To page B4

Upon the approval of the EO, the BOI, pursuant to the Motor Vehicle Development Program, will issue the guidelines that will govern the implementation of the preferential tariff privileges.

The MVDP, Motor Vehicle Development Program aims to promote the country as the Asean region's manufacturing hub for motor vehicles, and motor vehicle parts and components.

The proposed EO will not only make the program more attractive to investors, but will also help promote the use of locally-assembled cars.

Even prior to the drafting of the proposed EO, Ford Motor Co. has already committed to invest $20 million for the establishment of a factory that will produce Ford-built vehicles, or those that run on alternative fuels, in the Philippines.

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BUSINESS

Stock market watchers bullish on prospects for '06

By Elizabeth L. Sanchez

THE YEAR 2005 WAS QUITE stormy for the Philippine stock market after being rocked by political conflicts and rising oil prices.

But market analysts, encouraged by a number of companies registering to brave the market, are bullish on the prospects for 2006.

"We are positive on the stock market. There is a lot of liquidity, boats built retail and institutional investors, and we expect new IPOs by (February)," BDO Securities president Ethan de Francisco said.

Despite the gyrations, online broker 2Trade Asia sees a buoyant market starting January as fund managers scout for better-yielding sectors that are seen to outperform the market in 2006.

"Most may have already factored in improved economic data, thinking with government's firm resolve to balance the budget," Grace Credeola of 2Trade Asia wrote in a report.

"Financials, property, energy utilities, mining and consumer-related should as well as those engaged in IT-outsourcing services may be favored, as these are likely to obtain either increased share or momentum in demand," she said.

She also said in corporate corporate outlook report that, so far as consumer-listed firms are concerned, mergers and acquisitions will continue to be the main theme.

In 2005, consumer blue chip San Miguel Corp. bought Australian dairy giant National Foods Ltd., Bioni Ltd. and a new bidding for Del Monte Pacific Ltd. with the Campos Group.

Ashburn Foods Corp., the country's largest fast food chain, continues to be aggressive as well in acquisitions. Petrolair Heuse is also another company to watch out for with its recent acquisition of Bonchon bar and grill restaurant and Japanese quick-service restaurant Teriyaki Boy.

PMO-owned in the power sector, 2Tradeasia projects that more investment in power generation will be required in the next three to five years as power demand is seen to swell by up to 8 percent until 2015.

The Power Sector Assets and Liabilities Management Corp. (PSALM) for one bid on six plants, generating around 3,067 megawatts in revenues. Included in the sale was the 600-megawatt coal-fired Masinloc plant in the 7,505 Pacific consortium.

To date, five hydropower plants have been turned over to new investors. The second round of bidding for the 600-megawatt Caliraya plant has also started and may possibly be awarded to a new investor this year.

First Generation Holdings Inc. of the Lopez Group is also poised to enter both on an initial public offering to bid for nine power projects.

Newer sectors tentatively also need to be accelerated. So far, regulators have delivered at least 70 percent of the sale of generation companies and transmission assets to the first quarter of 2006. The serving up of the Wholesale Electricity Spot Market was also moved to 2006.

Among the key issues that need to be clinched are include resolving the transition supply contract with power buyers and other mechanics to make those contracts attractive, 2Tradeasia says.

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$40M worth of loans for microfinancing OKd

Boosting businesses, job creation in rural areas

By Michelle F. Barro

THE BANGKO SENTRAL NG PILIPINAS (BSP) approved the government's plan to take out up to $40 million worth of foreign loans to fund microfinance programs in the rural areas and infrastructure projects in Mindanao.

BSP Governor Amando M. Tetangco Jr. said the Monetary Board, the BSP's policy-making body, approved last week an $18.66-million loan intended to support microenterprises in the provinces.

The loan will come from the International Fund for Agricultural Development, and will be used to provide credit to microenterprises in rural areas. The loan was intended to complement the Arroyo administration's agenda of generating more jobs including those generated by micro-businesses.

The loan proceeds will be given to the Small Business Guarantee and Finance Corp. (SBGFC), an attached agency of the Department of Finance tasked with providing credit access to micro, small and medium enterprises.

Tetangco said the credit facility to be released by the loan would be made available to microentrepreneurs in places like the Cordillera region, Sorsogon, Catanduanes, Samar, Central Visayas, Caraga, Bicol and Eastern Visayas.

The central bank chief said the loan will have a 40-year maturity and will be interest-free. It will, however, carry a yearly service charge of 0.75 percent, he added.

The Monetary Board likewise approved the endorsing of a $30-million loan extended by the Saudi government to the Philippines to help finance infrastructure development projects in Mindanao, particularly in Cotabato and Lanao provinces.

Tetangco said this loan would carry a 20-year maturity and an interest of 2 percent per year.

Aside from the estimated $60 million loan already approved by the Monetary Board, another $25 million worth of credit will be forthcoming approved by the central bank's policy-making body.

Tetangco said members of the Monetary Board had already approved in principle the undertaking of a $25-million loan from the Southeast Asian Banking Corp. to facilitate the regular importation by the National Food Authority (NFA).

He said the NFA loan would be used to pay for rice importation made in 2005 and additional importation this year.

What do we do with a problem like Fidel Ramos?

QUESTIONS OF POLICIES

Rhonnalyn C. General

FIDEL RAMOS SIMPLY CANNOT STOP TALKING against President Arroyo. I am not a retired Arroyo fan, but any ex-President should keep his mouth shut about the incumbent.

The former candy has left some skeletons in a Malacañang closet, which the latter can easily dig out and expose for everyone to see.

Ramos is fond of saying that he is just like an elder brother who wants to help. But his brotherly stance actually undercuts the President.

Ramos makes it appear that she cannot run the country without his help. In fact, he sometimes acts as if he were a co-President. Last July, at the height of the impeachment problem, Ramos rushed to the President's side. He was again by her side at the opening rites of the SEA games.

Yet, Ramos is hardly the man to give advice on how to run the country. He was not a brilliant President.

Throughout his six-year presidency, Ramos raised the value range of taxes to the internal revenue code. But he gave taxpayers like himself a tax break. He raised the value added tax to 10 percent. But he exempted about a hundred previously taxable items.

He built a twenty-kilometer road and a water system in Camp Aguinaldo, the MGB's stronghold. The camp became virtually an independent republic. President Estrada, in one of his few decisions, found it necessary to order the armed forces to use over-and-done the camp.

Ramos, the most outstanding veteran alive, signed a law that granted old age pensions to veterans over 70 years of age. But the law was a sham. It was never funded. Today the government owes the veterans an estimated P5.9 billion.

A Ramos flagship project was to build 1.2 million low-cost housing units all over the country. But the national government did not have the money for the groundbreaking plan.

Ramos ordered SSS, GSIS and Pag-Ibig to put up the funds. Four years into the plan, the project was in shambles. Less than half of the units were built. Many buyers refused to keep up with the payments on their poorly-built units. Tens of billions in pension funds have been irretrievably lost.

The SSS was a favorite milking cow. Ramos ordered the SSS to sink billions into the commercial strips at Clark Field, although the payback period was 17 long years. The SSS buckled under P30 billion in low-cost housing loans which are no longer be collected.

The Ramos presidency was even less of standard. Remember the Amari deal that reclaimed Manila bay along Roxas Boulevard?

In the last year of his term, Ramos tried to extend his presidency. Remember the signature campaign? When the plan could not get off the ground, his party anchorman him to name his successor.

He drew up a long list, then a short list, of prospective candidates. In the end, he anointed Jose de Venecia who had threatened to dig up some skeletons if he were not chosen.

The presidential campaign against Joseph Estrada was incredibly inept. Overturning the archipelago, Ramos trumpeted that JDV was the best man to carry on the Ramos-era economic policies.

The result was the number of all defeats. Estrada won in the largest landslide in 50 years. At the same time, Gloria Macapagal Arroyo ran away with the vice presidential race.

The 1998 presidential election was more a terrible debacle for Ramos than a stinging victory for Estrada.

Ramos now endorses the shift to the parliamentary system. In spite of his vigorous denial, it is widely believed that Ramos sees the parliamentary system as his way back to power.

But to be the first prime minister in Philippine history is a pipe dream. Ramos cannot run a seat in any of the districts in his home province of Pangasinan. De Venecia and the other incumbent congressmen there stand in the way.

Ramos may threaten to withdraw his support for President Arroyo if, by New Year's Day, she does not reject the ConCom's recommendation to scrap next year's elections.

What happen to Ramos talking about? Out of power for eight years, he no longer has a constituency. His retired general, not even Tony Abaz, has rallied to his side. The military brass in the active service has asked that the AFP be left alone. He has little support in Parliament. He is all alone.

Ramos' antics are a desperate attempt to remain in the limelight. It is a pathetic sight.

MONDAY, JANUARY 2, 2006 PHILIPPINE DAILY INQUIRER C1

LIFESTYLE

The best and the worst of Philippine art in 2005

C.J. Salcedo's "The Secret and The Problem"

GUYITO universe by Boy Sanvicente

Guyito makeovers. Hot-selling artists Hinunog and Bencab led established and emergent artists in reinterpreting Guyito, the cuckoo mascot created by Jess Abrera for the bazaar. To mark the paper's 20th anniversary, they painted over 20 Guyito fiberglass sculptures by equal hands and the result was creative fervor at its best. The Cuckoo will be installed in reading corners and school libraries all over the country as measure promoting literacy and the reading habit among the young. Among Hinunog and Bencab were Eddie Tuliao, Jack Iskul, Ignacio Patricio, Wire Antero, Emilio Velasco, Fernando Zobel, Salvador Guerrero, Soler, Cues, Bing Goodis, Raul Dibuen, Tres Reman, Wilfredo Offemaria, Boy Sanvicente, Art Sanvicente, Romeo Sevilla, Ben Tallaoghasi and Arden Rotor.

"PORTRAIT of Eddie Elvas," by Romulo Galicano

Romulo Galicano winning the grand prize in the international portrait contest of the Portrait Society of America. His portrait of his friend Eddie Elvas earned plaudits from such acclaimed artists as John Ellerson, John Howard Sanden and Ben Lindstrom.

"SELF-PORTRAITS," by Federico Aguilar Alcuaz

The three-part Solstice divine retrospective at Ayala Museum. Curated by Ted Pano-Perez, it reaffirmed about's contribution to Philippine art. The color-rich book, edited also by Pano-Perez, is an intelligent yet colorful survey of the artist's variegated works.

Well-curated shows: More and more galleries and museums have come up with well-arranged, confined shows, such as Rodel's Agustin Cruz's "Sorbetes" at the DT Ferguson Mansion, the named "Dalvit" at Lopez Museum, Ayala Museum, Ateneo Gallery and Silaco Pavilion, the Ronald Ventura show at Ateneo, the name showing the collections of the National Museum, the various exhibits at the Cultural Center of the Philippines and the Metropolitan Museum, the various shows at West Gallery, the "Babae" exhibit by various artists at Galleri Mine, and "drag/god" by the Thomasian Young Artists Circle at the DT Museum, UCP and Bulo arts Center.

Alternative art spaces, such as Blueroom (Bangkal, Makati), Artilum Art Gallery (Marikina Street, Pasig), UFO (Santa Rosal, Mandaluyong), and even Mag-Ro (ADSCOM in Quezon City and Peace Center in Makati). They are owned privately or co-owners and operate with agreements that the artists, which however continue to be the primary engine for the art market.

"ARCHAEOLOGY," by Ferdinand Agustin Dog

Hot-selling young artists barely out of fine-arts school. Romeo Perez had a solo show of his large-scale works he created for the children's book, "Elias and His Bees." Leonardo Aguinaldo, winner of the Philip Morris prize, also had a well-received show at Shoppe. Andrew Barrinuevo, winner of the Nokia prize, was a hit in Singapore. He also joined Worthy Valenzuela, Jaime Pocaan II, Rami Ubaldo's, LJ Tabalo, Lawrence Bocaya, Jinahlee and Ivan Reyno in the artwalk acclaimed group show, "drag/god," which examined the country.

BALINSOON Gallery

Web Linking. The digital art center by the National Committee on the Visual Arts of the NCCA was a boon to the nascent art form in the Philippines.

"ELIAS and His Bees," by Romeo Perez

AMORES Bartolome's "Pots"

Art booms and busts

By Cocoy Cruz C. Tejero

AS IN YEARS PAST, this one has seen what is good and what is bad in the visual arts in the country.

First, there is an art boom, which can be gauged by the proliferation of art galleries and exhibits. Indicators which are emerging from the woodwork by the dozens.

Second, it is a time ripe for the arts' value art, to suddenly made available to all. It has seen become regular for some galleries to offer as many paintings as exhibits of small pieces by masters and upcoming masters at bargain-floor prices.

Silverlens Gallery in the Arnaiz, G/4, bldg. 2, 6868 Ayala Ave., Makati City, and in its main gallery in Mary Santos Arnaiz at 44 West Ave., Quezon City, is presenting "12 x 5," an exhibit of over a hundred paintings in 12" x 5" format by 55 artists.

Ordinary, gallery-goers can now shop for high-grade art at a steal, such as Nelly Arnaiz's oil on canvas for P2,500. Especially, the cheapest are pieces by a beloved Artist like Arturo Luz, who with his novels on canvas of the same size for P40,000. Or of Roberto Chabet, who, of course, doesn't sell for art.

Third, the avant-garde is alive and well. In the last year, it has exemplified by Chabet's sprightly on installations. Gabby Barredo's bizarre kinetic sculptures, and radical artworks and happenings by batch young artists, particularly those from the University of the Philippines College of Fine Arts.

Fourth, international art keeps coming to the country, facilitated by institutions such as Ayala Museum, Metropolitan Museum of Manila, Alliance Française, and conjured on galleries like Finale and Galeria Duemila. This encourages the interaction of local and foreign artists, further enriching Philippine art.

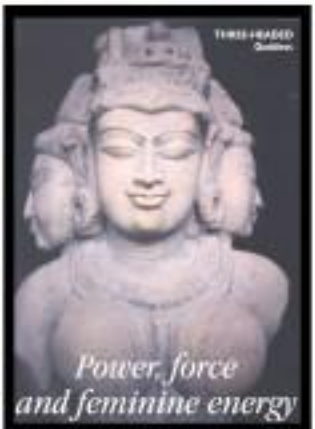
Fifth, the rise of community art as exemplified by the Organization of Peoples' Artists, and the championing of neglected art and indigenous culture by brave galleries like Ringo's. These demonstrate that art really belongs to the people.

On the downsides, first, some galleries and even museums don't seem how to properly handle or take care of artworks. Space and budgetary constraints have forced them to rotate freshly painted canvases at the bathroom after the exhibit closes, or, without air conditioning, let masterpieces by Old Masters gather dust and mildew in the basement.

Second, the trapping up of facile art. Arm conceptual installations is happenings to earth.

Third, the commodification of art and its purveyors. Even, namely Philippine society is pretentious ago, the young wanted to become lawyers or doctors to get rich, now they enroll in the College of Fine Arts.

There are a lot more we can point out, but there are bright lits. Whether there things, happening in the local art world are good or bad, as long as there is movement (a shift or change), it can only mean the art are alive.



By Amadis Ma. Guerrero
Contributor

THE FIGURES ARE NOT large but the impression to the viewer is one of power emanating through the sensuous, graceful curves and power. There is a sense of movement.

The women are Hindu goddesses with ample breasts, opening wombs, a benign expression, and they are superimposed with jewelries, beads, bracelets and headdresses.

The Hindu gods like Vishnu are also represented, but they are surrounded by the women as deities like Ganga, the River Goddess; Parvati, the Love Goddess; Lakshmi, the Rice Goddess of fortune; and Saraswati, the Unblemished Aesthetic Goddesses.

Spiritual yet erotic, the intoxicating sculptures made of semi-precious stone carved by artists and artisans using the Ma. Cilde era tables. They were adorned the Jaisalmer temples in the Thanjavur district of Madhya, India.

The Bhajjara temples used to number 85 but only 24 have survived. The temples "showcased by clean and delicate," as one narrator put it.

The works are on display at Galleria Fine Arts Gallery (8819469) at 56 Jupiter St., Bel-Air, Makati City. And they will be exhibited there until all or most are bought. Galleria is an outlet of the Singapore-based Tantimon Group, which earlier this year mounted an exhibit of antique Tibetan door

IN A YOGA POSE

paintings, also in Makati.

"The Hindu gods and goddesses should not be taken literally," pointed out the gallery manager Marsha Campos-Cho to a news media briefing. "They are symbolic forces."

The sculptures were executed in the round, in medium or high relief, on the outer and inner walls of the temples and on pillars and ceilings.

We have dancers, graceful nymphs, attendants of the higher divinities, couples in passionate embraces, powerful guardians, and many gods.

"Design the new goddess is visualized as voluptuous and beautiful, aware of other major Indian goddesses," explained Ms. Rosita Perez, the gallery's managing director.

Adding the secret intriguing of the erotic is the Tantra head of Goddess, which is the female counterpart to the male Hindu triad of Brahma, Vishnu and Siva.

The figures assess ornaments on its heads, torso and limbs to celebrate the beauty of the human body.

The work is called Shakti which. Parvi said, represents "the potency of the women to procreate, to nurture, to protect, to love and to initiate energy."

"In light of the bungling, it is quite ironic that women are often relegated to the background in India," Parvi concluded. "By restoring the role of these female deities through these sculptures, we can perhaps rediscover and recapture the very important symbolism of women in Indian civilization and society."

SUMA SUNDARI, Hindu goddess

WORKS by Flex Te Oyampo

The bounty of her art

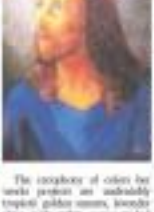
By Gino Dormendo
Contributor

FOR HER DEBUT SHOW, FITE ST. Oyampo presents over two dozen paintings in acrylic, a medium that lends itself well to her exacting explorations of nature's bounty.

A Mindanaoan graduate of the division de Hindu University, Oyampo began her love affair with oil 15 years ago when she trained in various media under renowned realist painter Rody Herrera. The latter reinforced by her extensive exposure to a wide variety of art traditions and media that the handy-trained art supplies store, Davids, imports, markets and distributes.

In the last five years, Oyampo has dedicated in various schools, workshops and master classes to advance the properties and application of oil and acrylic. This year, she organized the "art 4 kids" lecture for children on the basics of acrylic painting.

Having resolved to pursue art full-time, she resigned from her work as assistant manager for major operations. Oyampo found inspiration from her numerous travels around the country, initial in her to see certain works that celebrate the beauty of the Philippines and praise God's greatness and boundless love.



Uncanny

The exhibit, "Tilt of Inspiration, A Celebration of Tropical Philippines," Rhoda Wadsworth Gallery's demonstrates the 20-artist oil artist's uncanny handling of motifs as medium. With her flamboyant brushwork and heavens color sense, one to mention her unique, big if generous paint application, Oyampo has created a suite of paintings that, by turns, evoke and inspire, both sensual and spiritual in the depiction of the painting process and material.

The exceptions of colors her works possess are undeniably tropical: golden sunsets, lavender skies, misty nights, scenes evoked by an overpowering sense of warmth and light. The flowers she are Barong and its kaleidoscope of colors; Crabbins, both sensuous and exotic; El Nido, with its breathtaking view; Bohol, captured through the prism of its skies and waters. There are also new directions such as Coco Beach, Palaweno-style and masterpiece poster and concentrates to popular destinations.

The challenge emblematic posed by these images goes beyond the tried-and-tested path of most painters who are merely obsessed with surface gloss. But in the hands of an artist to fashion like Oyampo, the work acquires a truly complex character, evoking the naturally cast as well as non-exotic modest flora she's enjoys.

The cosmetic atmosphere evoked by these scenes derives from the Tendrec landmarks that Oyampo which, being a seasoned traveler, both love and abroad.

There are pieces that are more solidly representative as treatment, such as the multi-paneled painting, "Bonanza" Kaleidoscope of Colors," a large (36" x 48") work that encapsulates the many-splendored beauty of Boracay. There are also works that incorporate a variety of found objects, such as slippers, drift wood, shells and stones and feathers, all artistic testimonies of the artist's constant journeys throughout the archipelago.

In this debut show, Fite by Oyampo has proven beyond doubt that the artist in her has finally emerged. Her perseverance, unwavering devotion to her muse, and her deep spirituality have made this young artist a worthy addition to the roster of names who are bound to make a name for themselves.

E-mail author at ginomen dot@yahoo.com

The best and the worst of Philippine art in 2005

from page C1

JUNEBAI SAVA

Senses home for good. Now in his 70s, the Pittsburgh-based Spanish artist who grew up and trained in the Philippines, is set to make Manila his permanent base. He continues to be a tireless international artist whose works are collected in the chief galleries and museums in the West. But he says he has always regarded the Philippines as home.

In a related development, Filipino expatriate artists have started to be more visible lately, such as Manuel Ocampo, Gregory Botonsoul Roldi and Jill Sycamotte. There have also been reports that Manuel Rodriguez Sr., the prize vanguard, is coming home.

Scholarship of measure. The artworks gathered by the Bank of Universal Arts for its annual scholarship exhibit are usually of a high standard. But the 2005 edition was a disappointment. Many of the artists seemed to be merely going through the motions.

ANG Kiukok

Ang Kiukok, last year's winner, is a case in point. Her entry was a mediocre piece that looked like a rehash of her previous works. Ang Kiukok is one of the country's most accomplished artists. She deserves better.

Mindfa's hosting of the Asian International Art Exhibition. The exhibit, ongoing at the Ayala Museum, gathers the prominent contemporary artists across Asia, a rare opportunity for Filipino artists, enamored with Western models, to interact with their Asian counterparts. Hosting a show this big is no organizer's nightmare, and it is to the credit of the unflappable Yvonne Orosa that the exhibit has been managed effectively.

The Fukuoka Museum Asian correspondence. Through the efforts of its director Victoria Hoover and the Fukuoka Consulate in the Philippines, the Fukuoka Museum of Art in Japan has been acquiring works by Filipino artists, mostly by those who have been featured in the Philippine Art Awards. The museum has also been holding exhibitions of Philippine art. The latest of these is "Philippine Contemporary Art," which opened last month and will run until March 26. The exhibit features 10 artists, including Manuel Ocampo, Pio Abad, Mark Justiniani, Poklong Anading and Elmer Borlongan.

Art management courses. The privately run Philippine Institute of Art Management (PIAM) has been offering courses in art management for artists, curators, gallery managers and collectors. The courses are taught by local and foreign experts.

FRANCESCO Nunzi

Nunzi at the Met. Francesco Nunzi, a Filipino artist based in Italy, has been invited to participate in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Contemporary Art Society Benefit Auction and Party, which will be held on Jan. 12 in New York City. Nunzi is the first Filipino artist to be invited to the event.

Artist management courses. The privately run Philippine Institute of Art Management (PIAM) has been offering courses in art management for artists, curators, gallery managers and collectors. The courses are taught by local and foreign experts.

RAYDEN Ortino

There's a focus in the arts. But it also means the entry of unscrupulous in the art scene, if not of unsavory management schools that seek to lure to cash in on the arts and culture.

Elle B. Zubieta

HENY SISON

CULINARY SCHOOL

THE ESSENTIAL BAKING & PASTRY SERIES. This 30 – day hands-on class will cover the basics of pastry, desserts, bread baking as well as cake decorating. It is suitable for those wanting an entry-level position in pastry shop, food or restaurant industry. Classes begin on January 21 – March 25, 2006. Classes are held every Tuesdays, Wednesdays & Thursdays from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

THE ESSENTIAL COOKING SERIES. This 30-day hands-on class is our immediate way of entering the basics of cooking & baking. This program is for anyone who wants to work towards becoming a professional chef. Class begins February 20 – April 20, 2006. Classes are held every Tuesdays to Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Follow-up courses available: Intensive courses, short courses and short-cut.

For more information call 725-0139 to 41 / 7252 and ask for Mitz or Jenny

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

January 7 (Saturday) 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (classes end on January 28) BASICS & HOW-TOS FOR BEGINNERS by Nelly Reyes P1,500

January 7 (Saturday) 8:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. (classes end on January 28) B. E. R. CLASS: DESSERT & FLAVORS 101 FOR BEGINNERS by Chef Jessie Sincioco. Participants will learn the basics of dessert making. Participants will learn how to make and how to use the basic dessert sauces, how to make and how to use the basic dessert creams, how to make and how to use the basic dessert fillings, how to make and how to use the basic dessert toppings. Participants will learn how to make and how to use the basic dessert garnishes. Participants will learn how to make and how to use the basic dessert icings. Participants will learn how to make and how to use the basic dessert glazes. Participants will learn how to make and how to use the basic dessert coulis. Participants will learn how to make and how to use the basic dessert custards. Participants will learn how to make and how to use the basic dessert mousses. Participants will learn how to make and how to use the basic dessert ganaches. 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Feeling good in 2006

IT COMES BACK MANY TIMES, OUR resident talk about nation building. Even if we're beginning to do it for so long (at our reminders, nobody has come out to say that we've achieved it.

We are getting there, though. Infrastructures have been concrete gains in nation-building. It, in a stronger pace, a succession of political crises weathered (though not necessarily solved, many kilometers of new highway and bridges built, a new international airport in Manila waiting to become operational and, no matter what, unyielding of tourist arrivals.

We count the number of call centers that have mushroomed all over the country, as we do the increasing number of OFWs (overseas Filipino workers) and caregivers that we send abroad every day.

Impressive gains

The media report zero and impressive gains daily, adding up the plus marks for our grand nation-building tally.

We keep a scorecard of the unmistakable, the physical landmarks of nation-building. We do not tally the subtleties. How 2006 would be a good year to start doing that.

The subtleties are really about our quality of life. Of course, quality of life improves alongside an improvement in, among other things, governance, economy and infrastructure.

Quality of life is about having comfortable, livable cities with amenities that take the stress out of urban life; of having pensions and protection laws and areas that support human life; of having traditions that continue through the years; of maintaining the Filipino-ness in ourselves and in our daily lives.

Hardware? It's a no brainer. It develops so rapidly and is designed with obsolescence in mind. There will always be someone who will have a newer and better version, so quality level hasn't got to be to have the latest technology. It is a one-way street.

Software? That is where we stand. By no means, without the culture of caring where each Filipino is treated as a person and not as one with call centers, OFWs or caregivers.

Without our innate sense of hotline, how can our musicians and dancers have maintained their supremacy in the Asian stage? So are the many hotel inn Sofia Escobedo, celebrates Filipino food on the tongue.

How can our furniture, housewares, fashion and jewelry be the design leaders in the export industry if the Filipino does not have that sense of style?

Unique

It is our software that gets us places. It is something absolutely unique to us, a cultural quality that sets us apart from other people in the world.

Our software gives us national identity, pride of nation. It makes us feel good about ourselves.

Feeling good about ourselves is a latest litany issues, where Filipinos get together, we, separate invariably moves toward a litany of national woes, of how this country has been on a downside for decades. Finally, talk shifts to wondering is but hope is left for this country.

We could look at our country and our lives, more positively in 2006. Let it be the first year that most of us feel good about the Philippines, and there is much to feel good about.

When was the last time you felt good about the Philippines? The forgotten step in our nation-building efforts is to feel good about the country, to have pride in our selves. It is a step.

How can we rebuild a nation that we do not feel good about?

By those who have joined me in the past year's journey to discover Philippine heritage and to feel good about the Filipino artists, please accept my sincere gratitude and thanks.

E-mail the author at qil.fabie@yahoo.com

Jara and Rubio at Blueroom

IVAN while and **Pipo Rubio** present a exhibition in an artists at the Blueroom in Galleria, 1354 Lacson and Mayorista St., Sampaloc, Manila City until Jan. 15. In "Underground Press," Jara and Rubio focus on two cartoon and mainstay subjects: family and birds. Call 715 0748 or 0929 8 410368.

ADRIEN Aquilizan presents his mixed media sculpture and canvas works in black and white at "Reclaiming Roots: 101 Melchorita Bldg., 1109 Metropolitan Ave., Makati, until Jan. 21. Call 8870000 ext 317.

VISUAL ARTS

ANTHEA Yuson-Dee and selected A-D Editorial illustrators holding an exhibit of large drawings until Jan. 15, at Art Informal, 211 Constellation St., East Greenhills, Mandaluyong. Participating Art Informal faculty members also until Monday: Jose Tence M. Enriquez, Princess Viel-Santos, Ruth Mateo, Jose Orosman, Tahong Torres, Gabby Lacson, Jojo Bahia, Carlo Saenzon, Vincent Padilla and Gerry Ingco. Art-in-formal members include designer/illustrator Bob Ong, Ana Santiago, Rendon Pig, Sharon Pineda, Stephanie Lopez, Willie Ignacio and Edward Tan. Call 7239818.

KOKTAIL GALLERY presents "Alay II," a compendium of recent paintings, drawings and sculptures by more than 30 contemporary Filipino visual artists until Jan. 13. Participating artists include Leo Abaya, Joel Mendoza, Jojo Bahia, Marina Cruz, Neal Fernandez, Dennis Pelayo, Dominique Gaerlan, Sarah-Fuller Calder, Pow Valentin, Gabby Lacson, Dyan Laxa, Jomel Imperio, Lee Lim, Farida Montemayor, Jun Sescon, Vincent Padilla, Bernie Pelayo, Jill Pangilinan, Leo Quirubin, Jaime Wolfe, Carlo Saenzon, Eugene Tandoc, Jessie Antonio, Jose Tence M. Enriquez, Christian Tumonong, CJ Tuazon, Rafael Tapaya, Juanito Torres, Cris Villanueva Jr. and Pamela Ann Benitez-Galang. It is at 11 Bonifacio St., Cubao. Ph. 706 7029/30.

DR. HORACIO "Boy" Arnaldo will lecture on "Three Where Building Happens, The Poetry of Space," on June Invitation, on June 23, artist Lopez Museum, 6/F Philippine Stock Exchange Bldg., Ayala Ave., Poblacion, Makati City. The lecture coincides with the ongoing exhibit of architect-painter Arnaldo, "Drawing Space," which runs until April 2006. Call 8155317.